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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
102ND M. P.

By

Kai Schwensen
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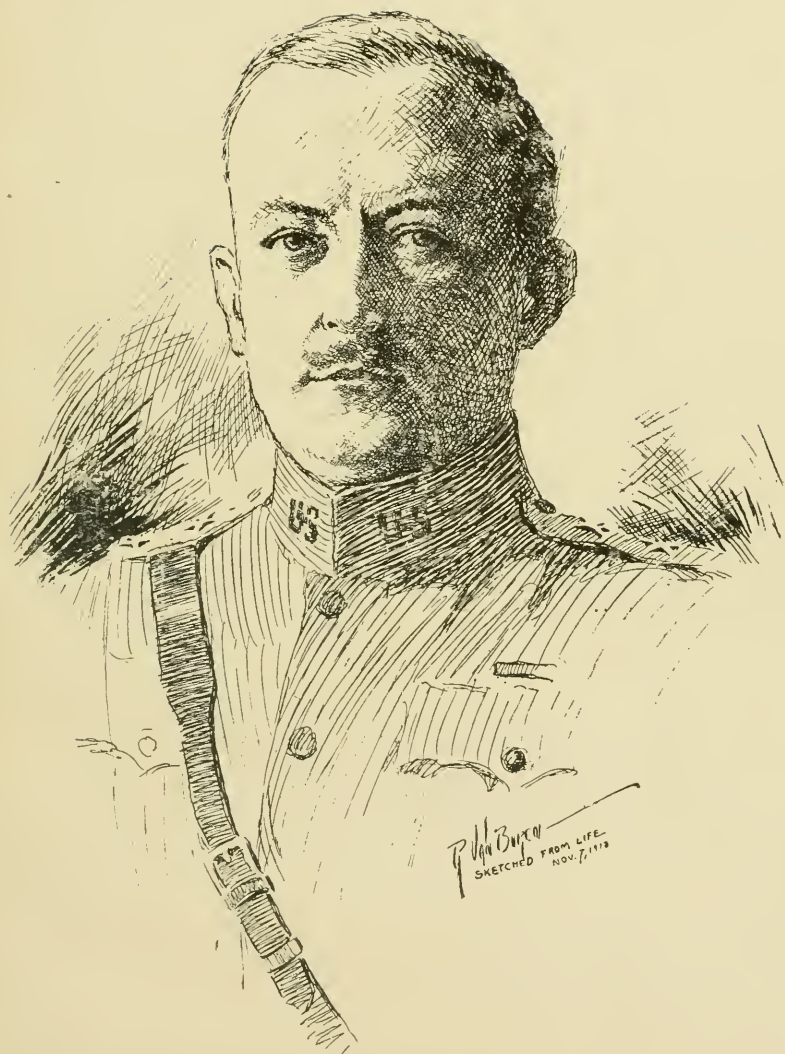
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JUN 23 1919



MAJOR GENERAL JOHN F. O'RYAN
Commanding 27th American Division

INTRODUCTION

This book is dedicated to the officers and men of the 102nd M. P. It does not pretend to be a literary masterpiece, nor a military document of extreme value. It is just a simple, concise report of our small unit's share in the great World War.

Outsiders might find that it contains many little things which look insignificant, immaterial, even trivial. Doubtless they are right. But doubtless, too, those very things mean the keynote to our masonry while abroad, to all that which made life endurable.

The choice of a title had its difficulties, as we have survived three names during our short existence. A little incident, however, decided the question:

The 106th N. Y. Infantry is coming down the St. Calais road, eating up the last couple of kilometers. At a crossroad they meet two mounted M. P.'s.

The doughboys throw a searching glance at the men and their armbands, then a couple of voices say:

"Hey, buddie, what outfit?"

"One Hundred and Second M. P.!" comes the answer.

"That's all right," drawl the perspiring infantrymen, seemingly perfectly satisfied; "you fellows are O. K.!"

This little incident, we repeat, decided the choice: 102nd M. P. is the name under which we are known, the name under which we fought, the name under which we made our humble reputation, under which we experienced all that which these notes—so we hope—will revive.



CHAPTER I

April the 6th, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany.

The break came as the unavoidable conclusion of a chain of impertinence and atrocities, which could have only one final result. Nevertheless, probably nobody was more surprised than the Germans themselves, when it finally occurred.

Startling as this may seem, it is easily explained. Nobody knew better than the Imperial Government in what inadequate state America was, to wage a war on the present tremendous scale. And even if our strength had been more imposing, it is doubtful this would have changed their actions and point of view—distance is always deceiving.

The break, however, came, and as the Regular Army and the National Guard—just back from the Mexican campaign—were the only available forces, these were naturally the first to attract the attention, forming the nucleus around which the proposed big Army had to be built.

When the new Reorganization tables appeared, they, amongst others, called for an independent Military Police force for each Division, and as the old New York Guard—then the 6th Division—previously had supplied this by details, drawn from the different units, a rather unsatisfactory arrangement, a call for volunteers was made. In June General John F. O’Ryan designated Major Shanton and Lieutenant Starr to take charge of the enterprise; and with New York City and Syracuse as recruiting centers the campaign started.

The inducement, “mounted service,” proved to be very attractive. Numerous candidates applied for a berth in the selected out-

fit; originally composed of two Companies, each in charge of a Captain, one first and two second lieutenants, and with a major (Major Shanton) as commanding officer.

Unfortunately, however, our officers-roster was never quite complete. While on this side hampered by too frequent changes, and while abroad by shortage in numbers. To tell the truth, we never mustered more than three officers at any time during our campaign in France.

Captain Roosevelt, Lieutenants King, Lawrence and Paris were off and on attached to us, while we resided at the 94th Street Armory. While at our departure Captain Wickersham and Lieutenant Munsill were in command of Co. A; Captain (formerly Lieutenant) Starr, Lieutenant Ceballos and Matson of Co. B.

The candidates, as said, being legion, it didn't take long to get close to the required number, 200 men per company. The first days of July found us with about 325 men enrolled; and as Authority declared this sufficient to make a start, we soon found ourselves confronted with a problem which in Bible terms read: By the sweat of your brow, you shall earn your bread.

We began drilling! In civilian clothes, that's true; but we made up for it with an immense enthusiasm, and were filled with extreme expectations, as we were told: "The tailors were working overtime on our new creations."

They arrived and we put them on. A rather difficult job the first couple of times. We discovered that "made-to-order" suits in the Army come in numbers. Ordinarily in two, in exclusive cases in three. That the Army supply sergeant is on par, if not above, the average salesman in any "Ready-made" tailor shop in his trying-on process. But, thank God, we came through alive, convinced that when we could that without much preliminary training, our physical condition wasn't nearly as bad as we had thought.

We lined up and looked, most of all, probably, like "Kitchen-er's mob," the competitors in a first rehearsal on a Wintergarden war-pantomime, maybe worse. But we were still alive and going strong. We were made familiar with the mystery of guard duty. How good or bad an impression we made, we don't know, but if the frequency of repeating this part of the military manual has any bearing on the final result, we were very good when we were discharged. The Military Police did their share of guard, both in the U. S. A. and abroad. Central Park lawns, formerly guarded by a "Keep Off," bowed to the military necessity, and permitted us to "Squads east" and "Squads west" to our hearts' content—sometimes more.

We were injected against all vices of this world, and still some. And later, or rather bye and bye, with the "Semaphore-germ," the "pack-a-roll" and "pitch-a-tent-worm"; had instructions in jiu-jitsu and other essential sciences not to forget our intro-

duction to strange gramophon-like sounds, which we were told was French. Mind you, the language of the tribes in the far-off country where we were finally destined to land.

The 16th of July found us—without any formal request as to our wishes for or against—as part of the U. S. Army, being mustered into Federal service on this date. It didn't mean a particle of difference at that, except—so we were told—in pay. But as we hadn't been paid as yet, and doubt existed we ever would be, we didn't care; and time went on and on as before.

We faced the military menu, informed by the military expert that “the allowed ration might not entirely satisfy our hunger, but it had been scientifically proved in Calories and Centigram that it was ample for the upkeep of human energy and endurance.” Most of us hated “Science” from the very day.

And, all this time, we more or less unconsciously inhaled doses of the military courtesy which is so “indispensable” to the discipline. Of the martial caste-system, the “spic-and-span” law, and the rumor habit, which according to prescription should grow stronger day by day. The prescription was right!

At last, on the 6th of September, we marched out of our Armory, heavy under the burden of everything in this world which comes under personal comfort articles. Without arms, with which we were not yet entrusted. Cheered to the roof by the crowd in the streets, and set out for Spartanburg, all and every one earnestly believing that our Christmas would be celebrated in Paris. At that time our silent hope, whenever the talk was about “somewhere in France.”

* * * * *

The first railroad trip as a soldier is another leaf in military education. Your habits and brain-cells are still so intimately associated with the comforts of civilized life that you as yet are unable to appreciate the “Army-express” in all its glory. You hesitate accepting the poetry of the imposing kitchen car with its dew-covered waterbag and perspiring K. P.'s. The expert's information—the same who introduced you to the military menu—that 6½ square inch is plenty for a 6 feet 2 O. D. with a 109-pound roll of comfort articles. But, as even an Army express has a time schedule and you still have a desire to spend your Christmas in Paris, you finally say good-bye to family and the deputation from the local Grocers and Undertakers' Association, entrain, and squeeze yourself into the 6½ square inches, generously helped by the convulsive jerks of the train, which—with a speed exceeding 1½ miles an hour—starts south.

The train kept up its southward movement for three days, frequently stopping for a rest. We discovered the use, but didn't acquire any particular fondness for, Hardtack and Bully-beef. That there is a distinct contrast between the white and colored

race indicated, to prevent the calamity of mixing, by signs posted at all places where such distinction seems necessary. That the home of the watermelon still is in sunny south, where they are grown alongside the railroad tracks for the convenience of slow-moving troop trains. This and that and a lot more, until we, on the morning of September 9th, passed through Spartanburg, happy to discover that we hadn't been completely fooled, but that the town really existed.

Two miles south of the town we detrained and stampeded to our selected camp site. We pioneered for a couple of hours. Dark found us inside the pitched tents, riding on our cots, now and then sounding the depth of water around them with an improvised log made out of a shoestring (issued) and a can of corned-willy, as sunny South, to celebrate our arrival had surprised us with a rain-storm, which flooded our bungalows before we had time to protect them with Regulation O. D. trenches.

But as we had stood the strain so far, we faced this new agony as true men, figuring that this new experience might give us a chance to enlist in the navy, if our ability to execute Hart-Andersen-Fairbanks stunts on the promised steeds proved to be a failure. Our first duty was making our camp look civilized. Trees, of which now only the stumps were left, and some few cotton plants, were its former tenants. These we attacked ferociously, and before a week had gone they had entirely disappeared. The crater-like, convulsive clay-surface was made into an attractive settlement with level streets and squares, fences and bridges. Artistic members of our colony created monuments and other wonders, which compare favorably with Plaza Square, Cleopatra's Needle or Friederick der Grosse's Denkmal, and probably already are to be found in Baedeker. This last, being only fair to assume, as it was highly commented on in the local newspapers by their art-critic.

At the same time our shortage in hats, shoes, breeches and blouses had been remedied, and such being considered fit for presentation, we at last made our appearance in Spartanburg, to take over the burden of the military administration, and make the town safe—against—democracy.

To make a long story short, our life was from then on a veritable "double existence." It was a matter of Spartanburg or Camp. Spartanburg stood for guard duty and waffles, spy-intrigues and wheat cakes, the old school house and movies, feeds, flirt and ice cream. Camp meant Reveille and Taps, drill and inspection, cold tents and gloom, fatigue, K. P., and stew. The choice was rather easy, and as details changed weekly, numerous "cases" turned up which necessitated more than one week's investigation by the assigned Sherlock Holmes, the lucky one—when he finally did return—invariably informing the envious "that he would rather stay in camp, anyway."



102nd—"DIRECTING TRAFFIC"

Late in October we at last got our horses, or at least some of them, thereby being able to display a mounted detail in the Spartanburg Parade. During the following months horses became the all-important question. Stables and corrals grew up, replacing our first primitive picket line. Mounted patrol duty was made part of our daily routine work. The surrounding roads and villages were considered our legitimate property, and names as Saxon Mills, Whitney, the Pumping Station, Arcadia, Glendale, Reservoir, the Hogfarm, and Haines Junction are sure to revive a world of memories.

It was also during these months many of our familiar faces disappeared. O. T. S. took some, Q. M., the Flying Corps, and Ordinance Department others. When the call for linguists came, more than a dozen left. One joined the Veterinary section. The gaps, however, immediately being filled, as our waiting list was always crowded.

By New Year the entire outfit was mounted, thus inaugurating a new era. Everybody couldn't be rated a Derby-jockey, but we, at least, succeeded in creating a very high average-standard for a mounted outfit, and—Campobella was the place where the finishing touch was put on. But Campobella stands for more than that: It was there we, for the first time, tasted the enchanting drink of camp life under ideal conditions. Drank nature's intoxicating wine from simplicity's sparkling gold cup.

It was there we felt the sweetness of the sunshine's, moonlight's and wind's tender caresses, when we drove our horses over the mountain plains in wild gallop. Or listened to the whispering creek, where the forest was dark as sin and cool as the crypt in a cathedral.

Oh, yes—those were the days!

February the 6th our advance guard arrived as a protection for fields and property during the maneuvers, when the division took permanent possession of the artillery—and infantry ranges. It was often rough and strenuous work, long hours and even resulted in real moonshine adventures, but it was the kind of work and life we fancied. We loved it!

Campobella, Innman, Tryon, Landrum, Gouensville and Tigersville—not to forget Walter's Farm—mean memories, sweet memories, many and everlasting.

April the 11th R. T. D. Dunlap died in the hospital, a severe bronchitis depriving us of a good friend and partner. His funeral service in Spartanburg, April the 13th, saw both companies present, presenting the most conspicuous mounted parade in our entire history, to bid him our last good-bye. Incidentally, it happened to be our farewell to Spartanburg also.

Concrete rumors about a speedy departure for the theater of war just then fortunately reappeared in camp. We say fortu-

nately, because it couldn't have been delayed much further. We had longed and hoped, were promised and disappointed, and had almost reached the stage where we sincerely believed that our effort reading the war news in the daily newspapers would be the only one ever called for.

These rumors finally took form. A certain nervousness seemed to confirm their quality. One sunny forenoon, after having some pictures taken of the entire organization, we turned in our horses to the Remount Station. It was one of the saddest days in our young lives. We had come to love those animals. They had become our real friends. Our sole companion on lonely rides. Our silent listener to daily worries. Our first, last and only care.

And now good-bye. Heaven only knew what specimens we would get "over there." One thing, however, was quite certain: they would never, never compare with "him" or "her"!

"Him" or "her" was the individual, the best, prettiest, wisest and—only—horse.

A few days after the realization came true. Boxes for saddles and other equipment were manufactured after an improved Ford-system. Our officers roster made complete, Captain Ceballos and Lieutenant Baldwin, Captain Ackerly and Lieutenant Ruxton being in command of the two companies, respectively, such finally putting an end to the long list, on which Captain Nicholas, Storm, Querie, Davis and Franchot; Lieutenants Parker, Kennedy, Chittenden, Paris and Taylor, had all figured.

May 4th we broke camp, and left for unknown destination. May 5th we arrived at "Camp Hill," Newport News, Virginia.

For 12 days we were held there in quarantine, attending endless inspections and red-tape parties, made endurable by the permission to have visitors.

Early in the morning, May 17th, the two companies left with about one hour's interval, marched to Newport News, "rested" in the streets and proceeded to the dock-gates. The first doors guarding the secrets of "the big adventure."

And as the description of our previous experiences has been related in a rather "sketchy," gay manner, intended only to give a short, preliminary résumé of our early deeds and doings, we shall now settle down to a more extensive, thorough report of our trip, track and achievements during the months abroad, those, which if not the most important, surely will remain the most unique in our lives.

CHAPTER II

Twelve o'clock found us all on board the transports. Co. A on SS. *Pocahontas* (formerly *Princess Irene* of the North German Lloyd Line), with 102nd Eng., 102nd F. S. C., and part of the 102nd Tr. Hdq. Medical Corps. Co. B on SS. *Madawaska*, with parts of 319th, 320th and 321st Infantry, but without Lieutenant Ruxton, who was transferred at the last minute.

Four o'clock the ships hoisted anchor and backed out from the piers, cheered by the throngs on the quay and receiving a noisy whistle "Godspeed" from the many steamers in the harbor. Two hours later we ran through the long line of battleships anchored outside Old Point Comfort, and dropped anchor off Hampton Roads for the night.

Having made ourselves acquainted with the strange, new surroundings, and consumed our first meal on the high seas, the evening was spent watching our aviators taking their rather dangerous evening spins, and throwing a last glance at the country we shouldn't see again for so long—some of us maybe never—we turned in, to find ourselves next morning moving northeast in a heavy fog, which made speed impossible.

May 19th, still hampered by fog, we arrived at our meeting place "somewhere in the Atlantic," all of a sudden appearing in the very midst of those transports, with which the rumors had been so busy. All wonderfully camouflaged, as our own, and under protection of a cruiser (U. S. S. *Huntington*) and one of our new sea-going destroyers (No. 79).

Around dinner time the picturesque convoy steamed eastward, the afternoon being occupied with handing out life belts (coats) and receiving instructions as to where to report in case of "fire" or "abandon ship."

Probably nobody thought of it then, but the issue and arrangements of these safety devices was really several days ahead of the normal schedule, as the fleet had just received a wireless about the presence and activities of German submarines along the coast, wherefore precautions had to be taken in case of a possible emergency.

The "lights out" after dark now also meant "no smoking," as even a lighted "butt" might be a valuable help for lurking "subs" where the curtain of night otherwise would have protected us from detection.

Gun crew and submarine watchers were selected; the gun crew acting as ammunition detail, supplying our 6-inch guns with their rations of 90-lb. O. D. pills during attack, while the submarine

watchers distributed all over the ships, each had a certain area of the treacherous sea level under constant observation.

That the 102nd M. P. supplied more than half of these special duty men was only what could be expected, trained as we were to the very minute, in immediately detecting any suspicious char-



CAPT. JUAN CEBALLOS AND LIEUT. ORAN BALDWIN

Commanding officers during our entire stay in France

acter who threatened fellowman's property. This, however, not changing the fact that the "submarine criminal" was as yet an unknown specimen in our criminal annals.

Next day, May 20, ignoring the frequent showers, we began our daily emergency drills, and the same evening, at sunset, the guns were manned and made "clear for action" for the first time.

May 21st, 9 A. M., the *President Grant* came up and joined our procession, now numbering 9, not including the warships, which likewise had been reinforced and now consisted of 2 destroyers (79 and 80) and the cruiser. And as the days from May 21-25 were rather shy of excitement, it is only fitting to put in a note about the

daily life and behavior of the troops on their trip across "the big pond."

First, then, judging from all these different types of men, ranging in age from 18 to 40, our government ought have no fear whatsoever about solving the personnel question for our proposed big merchant marine after the war—if the behavior and adeptness of these men may be used as a guide for the prospective material. The quickness with which they made themselves "at home" under such unfamiliar conditions was startling, to say the least.

Twenty-four hours out, and everybody could tell you, in sailor terms, the location, use and object of most everything on board. But, speaking about locations, rather accommodations, these were not exactly plentiful. Of course, in such emergency, and sending across monthly the number of men we did, boats had to be crowded, but it looked as if some more deck space could have been provided for. As it was, only a minimum could sit down at a time, and had it not been for the boys' own initiative, in arranging boxing bouts and miniature vaudevilles, time would often have become terribly dull and weary, even if there was a "movie" to kill the monotony. The boys' spirit however, saved the day.

The prospect or realization of danger never seemed to enter their minds, and even the unpleasant privacies, which are connected with a slightly rolling ocean (as on the 23rd to 25th) and which produced green-yellow faces, a shaky messline, and an immense waste of food (mostly after it had left the mess kits and commenced the hike down to the hungry stomachs), was unable to lower the morale, and was conquered with a good-naturedness and "take-it-as-comes" spirit, which was indeed remarkable.

The meals were very good and plentiful, for that matter better than we ever saw them in camp. The sleeping quarters crowded, but otherwise as good as could be expected. Some more showerbaths or cleaning facilities would have met no objections, but—as already said—the want of space to sit down or move around was the only *real* setback.

Were the boys never homesick? Yes and no! Homesick, however, is not the exact word. Millions and millions of thoughts were most certainly, every hour of the day, sent back to those "back there," but you wouldn't feel it, hardly suspect it. It is one of the wonders of the war, a silent, unspoken agreement amongst fighting men, not to talk about all the dear ones left behind. It was the case here, and we met the same attitude everywhere and all through the war.

You would therefore talk about your daily troubles, disappointments, pleasures and hardships, extravagant "feeds" (you had had), beautiful girls (you might have had), the economic prospects of China (based on your knowledge of "Chinatown") or sightseeing in Sahara (the last visions from the beach, not includ-

ing the—only—girl), about all and everything on earth—except that or those who really counted in your life.

Indeed, human beings are strange, and as soldiers make no exception to this rule, they just laughed and joked, thought and suffered, but—they didn't talk about it.

As we were nearing the Danger Zone, the convoy changed its irregular physiognomy into a double rank battle formation. On May 25th the crews had—rather, intended to have—an improvised target practice to try out our trusty 6-inch guns, but the practice stopped almost as it started, the target being shot to pieces by the second shot. Incidentally, however, this maneuver proved to be just in nick of time. Next day (the 26th) at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, an overturned whaleboat appeared on the horizon, suspected of hiding a periscope. The convoy immediately opened fire and sank the suspect, cheered by 20,000 men, who from their improvised "bleachers" joyously greeted the first "out" in our first inning with William's cohort. Same night—it was wonderful moonlight—and rather unnoticed as all hands were then asleep, the gun crews had another "scare." The ships all made "clear for action," but as nothing happened, it only resulted in the entire night spent in "watchful waiting." The guns were, however, from then on, kept manned day and night; it really looked as if the enemy was especially interested in "O'Ryan's Traveling Circus."

The 27th was a beautiful, clear day, but cold. If it wasn't because everybody realized the necessity of the arrangement, probably all those who slept below the waterline and that day got orders to sleep on deck until our arrival in France, would hardly have appreciated this instruction. But the previous day had taught a lesson, and made the reasons for the order easily understood.

The same night two new destroyers arrived, replacing our two former companions, which had left us for a little flirt somewhere else. And next day (the 28th), 3:10 P. M., 7 new destroyers appeared from "over there," whereafter our cruiser bade us good-bye and turned homeward, leaving the guard to the fishlike torpedo-boats, gracefully jumping around the convoy in a manner strangely reminding one of the flocks of "porpoises" we had already met. At 5:30 in the afternoon a "sub" is sighted; our destroyers take a 38-miles-an-hour flying start, crash over the spot as racehorses, dropping a couple of depth bombs. The explosions shake the ships from top to bottom, mountains of water, foam and—black—smoke (indicating hit) shot up from the blue-green water, where their razorlike bows had just cut a terrible scar, and—it was all over! Second inning (for William): No hits, no runs (?). Score: 1—0 in our favor.

The night of May 29th, now being in the Danger Zone, everybody sleeps fully dressed. Expectations run high, as we are told we may probably reach France the next day. The crews are

already busy trying out cargo-gear, nets, etc., and 2 P. M., May the 30th, two aeroplanes, like those birds which indicated the presence of land to Columbus, are seen hovering over the fleet, but soon forgotten, as we at 2:10 find ourselves in a veritable engagement with a considerable number of German submarines.

The running fight lasted for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The white smoke from the artillery soon hid part of the details. The destroyers are dashing madly in and out, circling the convoy like anxious animal mates protecting their offspring. Red gun flashes momentarily blind the eyes; bomb and canon detonations deafen the ear, forcing the ship's steel bodies into a slight, vibrating motion, as if a deadly nervousness had almost paralyzed their nerve centers, this nervousness being the only one felt, as everybody otherwise is absolutely indifferent and cool. Not the slightest sign of fear or realization of a possible catastrophe may be detected, the men, on the contrary, seem to consider it as an exciting entertainment put up solely for their benefit, as a fitting celebration of Decoration Day and our arrival in France.

As another "sub"—now making the score 2 to 0—was accounted for, our naval engagements may indeed be recorded as extremely successful, always remembering that a convoy is first and last on the defensive, only waging a battle when forced by bitter necessity. At 5 P. M. we entered the beautiful bay leading into St. Nazaire; waited there about half an hour for the French pilot. Around 7:30 we slipped into the inner bay, passing close by the wrecks of several ships which had been less fortunate in escaping the pirates. And cheered by the immense crowd on the shore, flags and a 100 per cent. Yankee Rah!—Rah! we slowly steamed into the harbor, resting safely behind the first lock-gates by 9 P. M.

Floating from one basin to another, the ships finished their last lap through the town in a couple of hours. It gave us time and opportunity to envy a flirting M. P., make the acquaintance of the first poilu, and a mob of kids begging for "cigarettes" and "souvenirs"—two words we will never forget.

At 11:50 we finally docked, and after a few hours' sleep we left our floating hotel next morning about 4:30 on the 31st of May, in the year of our Lord 1918.

CHAPTER III

So, this is France. Well, well, well!

Seated on the sidewalk, we take a look at the town. It is rather a busy place we have had selected for us for our first-hand impression, right outside the docks and railroad station.

Heavy motor trucks and gray-painted army cars are passing by in an endless stream. Officers of all ranks and nationalities, but mostly Americans, likewise. There come three French soldiers, pitifully young, none of them more than 17 summers. Two old men look at us with a peculiar look, shake their heads, and disappear in the houses. Every house is tightly shut, as if only death lived within. Maybe it does.

There is the advance guard of our friends from last night, the kids with their inexhaustible crave for cigarettes. And behind them, a woman in black, one of the many. Because, wherever you look, you will always find that—women in black, suffering and despair. Did you ever think that a country could be bled so white, combed so close for men?

And if you speak to them, the old men or the mourning women—for children, thank God, even in war times remain children, and do not realize how cruel life can be, or what war really means—then, you will find a boundless despair, a suffering so intense that it hardly seems possible, an already settled, definite belief, that it is all over, that the war is lost.

We mention this, because that was our first impression. Because it was probably the most remarkable thing we saw in France, and we saw a few—the complete change in less than three months, from the gloom of defeat to the glory and belief in victory. On a people who have suffered, conquered and emerged as the French nation has, this casts no reflection. It is, on the contrary, unimaginable how they had still courage and grit enough to stand up once more. But they did. A short résumé of the general situation to explain the prevailing pessimistic outlook seems justified:

What could be termed the initial battles of the German final drive had just come to a close. The ground taken by the English around Ypres in 1917 had been re-taken. Hazebrück was in overwhelming danger. Amiens was again within striking distance. Soissons had fallen, and the closing-in process on Rheims had become acute. The lull in the fighting had given the Germans time to re-establish communications through the conquered area. They knew probably only too well that they had practically passed through the Allied defense system to its entire depth. And as even conservative estimate credited the enemy with at least 72 re-

serve divisions on the western front, a new blow was expected daily, logically around Amiens or Montdidier. A blow which, if successful, would separate the French and British forces, before the weight of the Americans could be felt, and open the road for a decisive push against either Paris or the Channel ports.

The last days of May the artillery again began to roar on the Somme and Lys fronts, followed by an advance south of Soissons, where it was claimed the Germans were now only 45 miles from Paris. The advance, however, was not taken very seriously, as it was suspected to be an operation, only meant to draw the attention away from the real point of attack.

Now was it any wonder that the population was stunned, staring, as it seemed, the very defeat into its cruel face? And after sacrifices so indescribable and glorious that no comparison throughout the entire history is possible.

Was it any wonder that the old men shook their heads and thought that it was all over, that we had come too late?

For three days we were quarantined at the American Rest Camp about a mile outside St. Nazaire, for the first time being introduced to chicken wire beds (oh, how we often wished for those later on!). For 48 hours we took over the entire camp guard, the camp at that time housing some 20,000 men. On the third day, or June 2nd, "something was in the air." In the afternoon and evening our baggage was sent to the station. In the evening we confidentially were told that we would pull out sometime during that night. And we turned in, tired but happy, knowing that we at last were on our way, to face the ordeal for which we had come—the World War.

* * * * *

Two o'clock we were called, torn out of our sweet dreams by a quartette singing Chopin's funeral march, adding an improvised finish chord to each line, so effectively executed that the original music almost seemed superfluous. Some ten minutes after we had lined up (we had already packed our "apartments" before we turned in) and in a slight rain and under cover of night, we sneaked out of camp, marched through St. Nazaire to the railroad station and entrained for the great unknown.

Our train—a rather unpleasant change to the worse, of what we until then had considered the limit of non-comfort—drawn by a locomotive of a slightly improved Stephens type, pulled out. We had started on a two days'—and nights'—ride, which, next to the torture of waiting for our departure for home, doubtless will be rated as the climax of our sufferings abroad.

Five minutes was more than sufficient to convince everybody that with ten in a coupé, legs 2 feet 8, and space between seats 1 foot 2, comfort in a sitting position was impossible. The height of the cage being less than 5 feet 2. Standing up was equally out



German soldier in full "war-paint," including gas mask, hand grenades and the famous steel helmet

of the question. The idea of lying down had not even entered the inventor's brain, while all straps, as those we know from subway and street cars, were carefully omitted. This last was about the only sensible thing about the whole arrangement, as it doubtless saved some lives. After the first night everybody was willing to try most everything—even hang themselves.

The only consolation, the only one a traveler has on a long trip when dining—and sleeping cars are eradicated, was watching the scenery or other objects of interest. The first German prisoners of war were therefore looked at with considerable curiosity. So was the first large town, Nantes, while the country itself brought forth one comment after the other, for its beauty and wonderful cultivation.

But, as the discomfort grew, these objects lost their interest and gave room for a complete disregard about everything—but space. The first “rest-station” will therefore always remind us that it was there we had an opportunity to find out if we were still able to walk and stand upright, and then—that it provided us with a cup of coffee. Personally, we think this arrangement an extremely lucky one—for the coffee. The best thing we could say about it was: forget it! It was so bad that we are thankful we don't even know the name of the place, it would spoil its reputation. Again we moved on, north, through Angers, le Mans and Alencon. Mentioning all the names would only be waste of time, as everybody knows them; since, being unable to sleep, watching the stars or collecting the geographical names were the only means to kill the monotony. It invariably resulted in a deadly scrimmage for the possession of the windows at each stop, to explore the valuable name, and—the possibilities for “vin-rouge” or “vin blanc.”

The next morning, to our surprise, we passed through Seine and Rouen. Somehow or other we had all taken it for granted that we were headed for the American Sector, and now it looked as if our route brought us away from it, north, to the very scene of the great British “back-to-the-wall” stand.

That called for serious consideration and discussion, and thus occupied, we killed the time until Darnethal, where we at last stopped.

A hospital train, packed with wounded, and stinking of carbolic and iodoform, made us for a second forget our own sufferings, but it will forever remain a mystery how we ever got out of those cars, as everybody felt sure legs had gone, arms were broken and the back simply never had existed. Incidentally having a talk with the wounded, it dawned on us, too, that we were getting nearer the real thing. The same talk making us feel more puzzled than ever, as the wounded were all English, Canadians or Australians. Were we, after all, really bound for the English front?

The station was patrolled by Canadian M. P.'s; French poilus

hang around waiting for a train. There was a peculiar feeling of depression and uncertainty in the air. Maybe the dirty, tired-looking soldiers caused it; or the sight of the wounded; or our own sore bodies. Who knows?

A dozen Germans, including four officers, and just taken, were locked up in the waiting room. Two of them wore uniforms of a green dirty color, which made them look like Austrian Rifles. Their pale, drawn faces, too, fitted into the rest of the picture, a picture that was bound to stir the emotion.

We had tea and crackers, marched up to the town-square, were dismissed, and dispersed as a pack of hounds or hungry wolves, searching the most obscure restaurants and stores for "mangé," which in English means something to eat. As it, for most of us, was our first experiment in this line, this, however, had its difficulties. Because, to get something to eat, you have to ask, and—ask, that was the problem.

Those who thought they could speak French could be counted on one hand, and those who could make themselves understood numbered two. When we nevertheless, practically all of us, had something to eat, it was due to a system of pantomime, instinctively originating and surprising in results. Which doesn't mean that we are afraid, we left the town and its population with the impression that we were dumb. The gestures were always accompanied by fitting phrases, but—we sincerely hope that nobody understood English. During the night General Michie had died on the train. When we came back we lined up as his coffin was brought out, paying last honors to the first of our division to die in France.

And again we boarded our torture chambers, and left—still going north—and if possible with less speed than ever. Again a short résumé is necessary to explain at least some of the reasons for our strange route and presence in this area:

The situation was critical, especially on the British front. The expected attack had not yet been resumed. But it was bad enough as it was.

The railroad junction at Amiens, Bethune and Hazebrück were under effective fire, meaning that the maintenance of the entire present railroad system in northern France was in extreme danger of being completely paralyzed any minute. St. Pol could be reached with long-range guns. The result was that an entire new set of emergency railways (three separate routes) had to be built, independent of the old main lines; an enterprise which lasted up to July. This caused our strange sneaking in by the back door. Some of the tracks we passed over were only a few days old and had it not been for them the railroad trip would have had other terrors in store for us than the discomfort. It would have brought

us right through the German artillery fire, and at a time when it was more deadly than ever.

The question "men" was, at the same time, as serious as ever. The German attacks during March-April had taxed the English armies to their very limits. Only 42 divisions were fit for active operations, at that only as a defensive force. They were far below strength, and sorely in need of rest. The supply of trained reserves was momentarily exhausted, and when reserves did begin to arrive, they were immediately broken up, partly to fill the gaps in the depleted divisions in the line, partly to be used for the urgent and extensive railroad constructions, or the new trench defense system (some 5,000 miles) which had to be built to close up the gaps. These immense undertakings were the reason for the presence in the back area of all those soldiers we saw from the train. That was the work they were doing, and which we couldn't quite understand, as we naturally, as all raw war material, considered a war a war of fronts, and as yet didn't realize that the rear is, at least, as important. The one necessitating the other.

If the German advance during those months had been forced home with all the resources the enemy had at their disposal, either around Amiens, Arras or in the Lys salient, a catastrophe would have been almost a certainty. But fortunately they didn't, for the third time losing an opportunity which might have won them the war.

The situation being so critical, some French reserve divisions had already, previous to our appearance, been sent up to the hard-pressed Flanders front, in exchange for five English divisions borrowed in April. The month of May bringing American troops in assuring numbers, troops who had already proved their quality, at last provided the necessary human material to gradually replace these. Four Yankee divisions were accordingly sent up to make good the shortage, at the same time getting an opportunity to show the Imperial armies in those parts that the American millions really existed, and were more than the "Newspaper Army" they liked to joke about.

These were therefore at least some of the reasons why the 27th division made its initial appearance on the English front and not in the American sector, but there were doubtless moments, during our trip north, where we might just as well have landed around Cantigny, Château-Thierry or Soissons, where the Germans still kept up their drive, gaining ground, but losing men—and time.

At 2 o'clock in the morning, on June 5th, we finally reached our last stop—Noyelles. We marched to an English camp, located right south of the town, and had our second cup of very good tea. Consumed what was left of our bully-beef and hardtack, at the same time looking around to get an impression of the "Tommies," with



German machine gunners ready for action

whom it now seemed doubtless that we, at least for some time, were going to share hardships, glory or disgrace.

And again we became conscious of "getting close to it." Bomb craters were sown all over fields and roads. The tents were camouflaged and protected with shrapnel and bomb shelters. The picket lines hidden, as far as possible, under trees. While on the road one pitiful convoy after another of refugees passed by, shivering in their few clothes, worn, pale and crying, and usually trailed by an old horse dragging some antique cart, containing all what had been left them of their former homes and property.

But aggravating as this might be to look at, we still had to face the saddest blow of the day. Returning to the station, our barrack bags were distributed, we were marched over to a near-by lot, and received orders to turn in all extra equipment. Imagine—months' feverish collecting, critical buying, begging and stealing, wasted by a mere command. Followed—and this was the real knockout blow—by another order, to turn in the treasured bags, except what we absolutely needed of our Department stores—pardon, private property, as we from now on would have to carry it all on our back. It is almost unbelievable how little that means, when you know that.

But, as an order is an order, we silently obeyed, comforted by an assuring promise that the bags would be returned a few days later. To tell the truth, we didn't see them until long after the war had ended, at that only to find them empty, except for a few articles which even an Englishman couldn't use.

* * * * *

At 2:10 P. M. we left, duly enrolled as members of the "Hob-nail Express," and soon disappeared in a cloud of dust, to finish up—more or less—strong in an English "overnight" camp near Sailly. We pitched our tents in a small wood, as night raiders were very frequent visitors, a fact nobody doubted, the ground reminding still more of a sifter than the camp we had left the same morning, sampled a glass or two—or maybe three—of "Epenay," and turned in, to be called at 4 A. M. next morning for another excursion trip.

Had the walk the previous day seemed hard for some of us, unaccustomed as we were to the treat of marching with full pack, the very thought of this comparative pleasure trip had most certainly completely vanished before night.

Our march on the 6th brought us through Sailly, le Titre, Forest l'Abbaye, Foret de Crecy, Crecy, Machiel and—that was anyway the understanding—ended in Machy. But other dispositions must have been taken, and when we arrived—Heaven only knows how sore, tired and thirsty—we were cheerfully greeted by the animating news that we would have to "eat up" another 6 kilometers before we could sit down and rest up after a good day's work.

Again we slung the packs on our maltreated shoulders, had

another long look at the empty canteen, rambled down the dusty road through Reguire Ecluce, turned south at the château, and found ourselves, or what was left of us, in Bernay about 2:30 P. M., having made about 23 kilometers that day.

Although our casualties had been rather heavy, it was probably the first time we realized how much endurance we really had when we were compelled to. It was also the first time we felt definitely convinced, that what other mistakes we might have made, our selection of the Cavalry-branch, had been the right one, if—we had only had the horses. But, as it was, the prospects for getting horses soon, seemed very slight. An immense corral near Paris, holding about 1,200 heads including those intended for our use, had been detected by German aeroplanes, and, on the 2nd of June, bombed so mercilessly, that it was practically wiped out of existence. Artillery horses and officers' mounts having first consideration, it therefore most certainly looked, as if all we could expect for quite some time, would be left-overs from the English. We are sorry to say, that this came only too true.

The 7th was used as a much-needed rest day to revive our numerous "dead," comfort the swollen, wounded feet and sore shoulders. To the surprise of many, the cases of cramped feet were, by far, more severe where ordinary Russet shoes had been worn, the up to then, so detested Hobnails therefore experiencing the strange sensation of all of a sudden being considered useful, instead of "dead baggage." The price, too, went up accordingly, now being almost 2 franc a pair—brand new, of course!

Bernay, typical for the many hundreds like it, we should see later, was but a small village, housing some 2-300 souls. The surrounding country was beautiful, rolling, with plenty of forests, rich, splendid cultivated fields, and cut by the already familiar canals or streams.

Somehow or other, all these small villages looked exactly alike. The bend or slope of the street might differ a bit, but otherwise it was the same church, the same graveyard (Neuville's pictures), the same straw-roofed houses, the same Estaminees, the same aroma of water-soaked soil, grass, flowers and manure. Even the type of people was so universal concrete that it appeared as if the same old men, women and children followed us around from one town to another, wherever we went.

As it was our first experience in "billeting," instead of spending our leisure and sleeping hours in pup-tents or barracks, the billet-question, too, will have to be explained.

Of billets, then, there are two varieties—front and back-area billets. Strange as it may seem, the front-area billets—all provided that there are still standing houses in said area—are by far the best. Here, as there isn't a human being to interfere, and as the population usually left in such a hurry that most everything is left behind, it is only a matter of selecting what "château" you

want, ordinarily decided according to how attractive the beds look or the presence of a stove, take over the property, and feel at home.

In the back area, still occupied by its civilians, it is not nearly as easy or comfortable. There a barn without walls, often even without a roof, ordinarily means the limits of luxury. Watchful eyes are guarding your walk through the vegetable or fruit tree patch against your—accidental—interference with their growth. The only way out of the misery is “billeting” yourself in a private house for 6-10 francs a week. Then, at least, you are sure of roof over your head, and a smile instead of the watchful eye. Money is a wonderful thing!

But those tricks we hadn't learned as yet. To tell the truth, we were terribly “green” and—we felt it. We were therefore continuously seen sneaking around the “Tommies,” the few of them we found, and who were the sad remnants of the former 66th Division (also known as the Click-idi-click Division), almost annihilated in the April offensive, to acquire some “dope” and general useful information as to how to get along under the present conditions and what might follow.

Our men proved to be apt pupils, and it is doubtful if any similar veteran outfit could give us much “inside-dope” we didn't know, when we came out of the line just before the armistice. But then again the Australians had been our last teachers, and, as they always did, they made a d—— good job of it.

* * * * *

Our stay in Bernay lasted from the 6th-18th of June. Beginning with the second day, we drilled twice a day, or once, using the afternoon for hardening-up trips. Rue, Arry, Reguire Ecluse or Machy were usually our goal on these hikes, and for drill field we used a large, terribly uneven site, southeast of the town. It was there we on maneuver day had a call by an Allied plane which, shooting low, dropped us our first aeroplane message, attached to a Belgian flag. Its whole appearance, maneuver and departure was such a revelation of beauty that everybody that day wanted to join the flying corps. But it had its anxious moments, too, as we at that time didn't know the meaning of the aeroplane horn, had heard loads of stories about “Jerry's” ungentlemanlike tricks using captured Allied planes, or our insignia, as means to get close to the prey without detection. The new English rifles, a couple of days before exchanged for our good old Springfields, were therefore clasped more tightly, until the identity of the guest had been settled. A precaution which wouldn't have helped us much, as the rifles were empty.

Talking about aeroplanes, everybody since our arrival at Bernay had been affected with “aeroplane fever.” It consists of an irritating, invariable, quick motion of the head—face upwards—

whenever the ear spots the machine, to find out if it is friend or enemy. The doctors claimed it was due to looking too long and deep into the numerous bombholes we had already seen on our rambles around the country. In any case, it made two men, swimming in the creek, run, entirely naked, up the street when a plane unexpectedly arrived and dropped a peaceful star shell. But all that was part of the game.

As machines were practically continuously over our heads, sometimes a stray bird, sometimes in flocks up to 50, this classifying became rather strenuous. But the novelty and excitement gradually wore off, and before we left, they had become almost boring—hardly anybody offering them a single look. June 11th our first detail left the company to report to the 19th English Corps at Pont Remy, a few days after being sent on to 27th Division Headquarters. The same week two others left for the Albert front for observation purpose, and when they came back we experienced our first right-out-of-the-hand information, on which we had to form our opinion, about modern war. The messages were not exactly assuring. The same despair and downheartedness which we met at St. Nazaire seemed to be predominating at the front. The belief that we were too late so settled that we were not far from believing it ourselves. Feverishly clinging on to our only consolations that everything was still calm and that time was playing in our favor, giving us the necessary breathing spell for reinforcing and reorganization.

At Bernay Captain Jennings (P. M. of the 66th Division) gave us an instructive lecture on what difficulties, and kind of work, we most likely would encounter at the front, based on his own sad experiences. It was rather an impressive talk, and opened our eyes to the fact that there were still a few little points, especially in the dramatic line, we would have to master before graduation, and which we didn't know from our previous wars in South Carolina. But again we feel justified in saying that we proved to be apt pupils—Yankees usually are.

Gas masks and steel helmets had been added to our equipment. It meant a variation in our daily drill, necessitating our familiarizing with this new torture apparatus—referring to the gas mask. As to the helmet, the criticism usually centered about its size and weight—a criticism which later disappeared mysteriously, when the shells burst overhead and made one wish for another headgear eight times the size and of unlimited weight—as long as the shrapnel pieces couldn't go through.

* * * * *

June 18th we left for Belloy-sur-Meer, over Neuville, Ponthoile, Noyelles, Estrebaeuf and St. Bliment. It was our longest hike yet, and spoke loud about the value of our daily hikes and general physical condition. Not a man fell out, but, to tell the

truth, some men did go down on our baggage lorry, their condition being such that the doctor refused them to walk. If our billets in Bernay had been bad, the new ones were still worse. A row of "houses," probably deserted by their occupants to prevent a miserable death under their ruins—it looked to be doubtful if they were able to stand another night's storm—were put to our disposal.

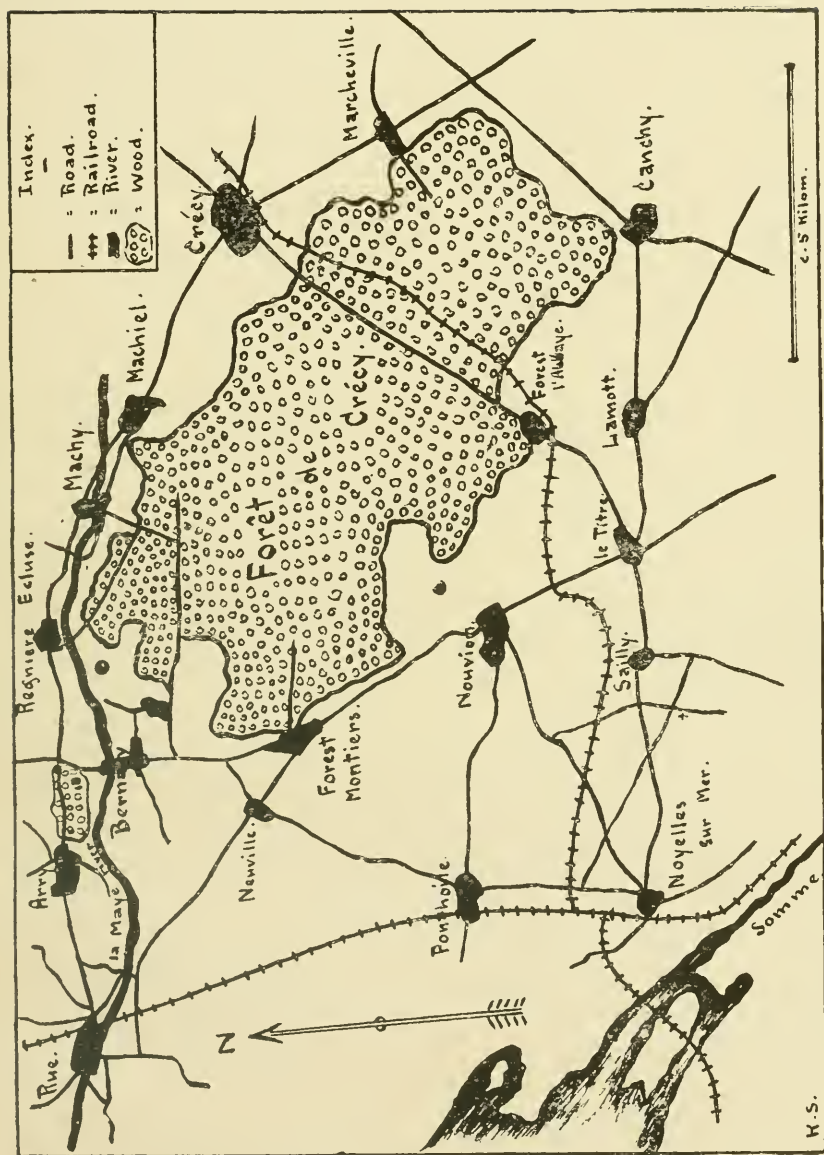
Rats showed themselves with a boldness indicating long and unhampered possession, and didn't try to hide their unquestionable objection to our unwelcome appearance on their lawful properties. But rats were already one of our least worries. What we wanted was sleep—and so we did. Nothing very important happened during our three days' stay. Oh, yes—pack-carriers were issued to replace our cavalry rolls. That brought us another step nearer to the Infantry—and ten away from the horses. But we were still full of hopes.

June 21st we left the houses and rats. Marched through Friville, Escarbotin to Fressenville, took the Abbeville mainroad to Miannay, turned north at Cambron, and stayed overnight at Grand Laviers.

The Abbeville main road is typical of the French highways—"grand course," they are called. Running in a perfectly straight line for miles and miles, and fenced in on both sides by tall poplars, they serve as a wonderful natural camouflaged road, hiding troop movement from the ambitious birdmen. We met several batches of German prisoners there, being escorted back from the lines. They all stopped and looked wonderingly at us. Remember, they had been told and taught that we only existed on paper, and here we were in the very heart of the British sector. It was easy to read their thoughts, it runs in German, "Wir sind humbugged."

On the other side St. Mars a gray Army car overtook us. It was General O'Ryan. That was the first time we saw the General since we left Camp Wadsworth. Next morning English lorries brought us through Abbeville, Auxi, and Doullens to Beauval, leaving a small detail behind to take care of our supply. It meant, incidentally, that we, from now on, were in the line, even if only in reserve. But it was the beginning, anyway.

Beauval—at that time less than 15 kilometers from the front—was not under bombardment. Doullens, however, now and then had a few shells screaming over the housetops. But this favoritism didn't excite any envious feelings. A look around—on the bombplowed graveyard, in the fields with their newly torn shell holes, or at the town itself, every cellar window hidden behind sandbags—showed clearly that it was only a momentary good-naturedness, and—nobody suspected such feelings to be predominating very long. We were therefore all "keyed up" for the reception of the first "Jerry shell." We even wasted a precious half hour in the



Our first "Area" in France

evening on it, before we ascended our chicken-cube bed. It was all in vain.

But the German night raiders easily made up for this disappointment. Not a single night passed without the aeroplanes paying us a visit. It became so frequent that it can only be termed boring, and they were rather bothersome visitors at that.

A whistle would cut through the night, notifying: "Jerry up." A few minutes after a whirr could be heard from their machines. When you went out, the searchlights would be visible creeping over the dark curtain to find the intruder. Some more machines, with a different engine-whirr, would appear. They carried small lights. They were ours. Now the real game started. Jerry would screw himself up higher and higher to escape. Ours would follow him mile after mile to get up on top, and the searchlights would continue their silent investigation, now and then guided by a Morse signal from our planes. It sounded almost like machine gun fire. And, if they did find him, if he was all of a sudden caught in the rays—appearing in the distance as a beautiful fluttering silver-moth—the anti-aircraft, and machine gun fire would open up, and "pump" their lead and shrapnel at him, until a new Morse signal silenced them, and another plane—ours—sailed into the stage, to fight it out man against man.

But often we didn't find him at all. Hidden in the night, he would make his exit, while suddenly two, three or four crashes from his exploding bombs would make the ground shake for miles. That was his good-bye, his cynical laughter over our failure. And—a failure is seldom pleasant!

One of these bombs fell close to Division Headquarters picket line and killed several horses. Another close to our back yard; four of them about 100 yards from our camp at Montrelet and Fiffes, and about 18 in our district north of Doullens. Oh, they were generous those days!

The first nights everybody had the feeling that their pup tent—those miserable small things we daily cursed, because we couldn't even turn over in them—was a square mile at least. We would listen and listen, and finally get up to watch the fights. But human beings are strange animals. Even those things became insignificant. A month after nobody would even lift their head when the "anti-aircraft" barked. The war had done its work. The belief in "the shell with a name" had become a fixed idea. And sleep therefore meant sleep, Jerry or no Jerry.

Our real work now started. Details were sent out to all the regiments of the Division, partly to keep order, partly to exercise traffic control. As the artillery had been sent down to the American sector and the trains were still in Brest it meant to the Infantry, Engineers, Machine Gun Battalion, Signal Corps, Sanitary, Divisional, and Headquarters Detachments. They were

scattered over an extensive area, and by the 25th of June we had therefore only a small force, including the General's Guard, in Beauval, while Doullens, Bonneville, Fiffes, Montrelet, Beaudricourt, Sus St. Leger, Lucheux, le Souich, Bouquemaizon, Grouchés, Milly, Ht. Vissee, Ivergny and Luchuel were all taken over by our men. Our French gendarmes and the Interpreter, Mr. Boegler, just assigned, remained at Beauval.

Being the first time out on our own hook in a foreign country, the first couple of days had their difficulties, arranging quarters and supplies. But the high quality of the men soon proved itself, and gave them the foundation for a "get-along-under-any-circumstances" habit, which is indispensable to a good outfit in the field—especially an M. P. organization. Any other military outfit is usually together, at least most of the time. In continual touch, under the immediate care and supervision of their officers.

With an M. P. outfit, it is entirely different; if our case was rather extreme, as we never had more than four officers, where we should have had 9. An M. P. force is practically always scattered over a considerable area; in groups of 4 to 12 men, with one or more N. C. O.'s in charge. Owing to this, it is next to impossible for the officers to pay more than an occasional visit to the widely distributed posts, these soon becoming more or less independent units, necessarily having to arrange all and everything themselves, and under all conditions.

Under normal circumstances this, of course, is all simplified. But when the outfit is in action and the base location hardly known, when transportation of supply becomes the vital question because neither transports nor supplies are to be had; when the work is overwhelming, weary and dangerous; relief urgently needed, but not forthcoming; when the strain has settled itself as an intense irritation, and finally—when the campaign is being fought in a foreign country, where the language at all times increases the difficulties—then the individual initiative and resourcefulness is the only deciding factor, and when the men of the 102nd M. P. came through such trying conditions with flying colors, their personal aggressiveness and tact deserve the highest praise.

June 26th about 20 men left for the 4th English Army Corps M. P. School at Merieux, being recalled already on the 30th, as we were expected to move. And starting at midnight, July 1-2, the 27th Division pulled out, and set sail north, to take over a sector on the Belgian front.

CHAPTER IV

Our men attached to the 53rd Brigade left over Candas those with the 54th Brigade from Doullens. All remained and traveled with their respective regiments. Getting off at Argues—some of the trains were greeted with shells near St. Paul—we marched through St. Omer to the assigned towns, St. Momelin, Lederzeele, Wulverdinghe, Arneke, Buyssheure, Broxeele, and Volkeringshove. Our Headquarters moved up with Division Headquarters and stayed at Nieurlet. From that day and until September 3rd we were part of the 2nd British Army Corps (Headquarters at Argues). The table gives the exact composition of the entire force.

The remembrance, which probably first will present itself, thinking of our three days' stay in these parts, will almost for certain be St. Omer. It was the first large town we struck since our arrival in France, and incidentally it happened to be the last, too. Until we, around the time the armistice was being signed, settled down close to Amiens.

The Fourth of July being considered a holiday, most of us had an opportunity to pay this old picturesque town a visit. A good dinner and a stroll in the streets (didn't we tell you there still were a few real streets left!) worked wonders. We began to believe that we, after all, were human beings; a thing we lately had doubted sincerely. And when we came back in the evening, over the shaky boardwalk bridge road through the swamps, we were—for the first time—treated to look at a barrage, even if it was quite some distance away. The bombardment represented the preparatory barrage over "Meteren," before the Australians, on the 5th and 6th, attacked this important stronghold and wrested it from the Germans. Strange enough, though, we hadn't seen any Aussies at all, being so close to them. But they probably had enough to do where they were, and so we had to satisfy our craving for novelty, looking at the picturesque members of the Chinese labor corps, who were building roads and trenches everywhere in the neighborhood.

As the question at that time continuously was asked why we were still only acting as reserves and not sent in to "do something." Why the—apparently—numerous English troops, likewise, were kept here and not brought to bear at the front, it is again necessary to try a short explanation of the then dominating strategy.

First, then, we were still a battle Division in the making, being gradually whipped into battle trim, hardened up to meet the

crucial test. And besides—well, that will be explained, answering the next question.

Second, the English troops we saw were not fresh men. They were the tired—dead tired—remains of the sorely tried and punished Divisions already referred to, at last relieved, and out for rest and reorganization. This process lasted up to the middle of July. It was an unavoidable necessity, a step which just couldn't be delayed any longer, as all these Divisions were at the very point of cracking, and had almost lost their morale. Everything else could—at best—come in for a second consideration.

As it therefore in reality was a mere playing for time, this

		2nd English Army Corps
32 Division		14, 96, 97, 19
33 "	2 Corps	98, 100, 146,
49 "		147, 148,
30 " (American)		59, 60 (Amer.) Brig.
14 Division		41, 42, 43,
39 "	7 Corps	116, 117, 118, Brig.
29 Division		86, 87, 88, 21,
30 "	10 Corps	89, 90, 104,
35 "		105, 106, 107,
36 "		108, 109 Brig.
9 Division		26, 27, 92, 93,
31 "	15 Corps	94, 119, 120, 121,
40 "		183, 184,
1 " (Australian)		1, 2, 3, 5 (Aust.) Brig.
6 Division		6, 16, 18, 71,
41 "	19 Corps	122, 123, 124,
27 " (American)		53, 54 (Amer.) Brig.

stage could fittingly be termed the period of active defense. The lines were accordingly thinly held. A sector of the British right flank taken over by the French, so as to further relieve men, when the Germans had finally been brought to a standstill in the Lys salient. Three more French Divisions were distributed in the back area, acting as an emergency reserve, together with the four American, and all the time the filling-up process was progressing favorably, by the now available English depot reserves.

The success of our arms in the Near East made it possible to transfer additional troops to the western front (2 Egyptian Divisions had just arrived and were camped near St. Omer). The extensive railroad and trench schedule had almost been completed. But the object was still rest and reorganization!

The beginning of July at last saw us in an assuring position,

ready and capable of small offensives. And the taking of "Meren" was the first undertaken on a larger scale since the trying months of April and May.

July 7th Division Headquarters moved up to Oudezeele, our Headquarters following. Our camp was located at the crossroad northeast of the town, the exact location in military terms being: Sheet 27—1/40,000. J. 8. d. 7. 2.

Our details still remaining with the regiments were camped in the surrounding country between Cassel and Wormhoudt, Ledringhem and Abeele. It is impossible to give the whereabouts with any certainty, anyway not for more than a day at a time. They moved when their orphans moved, which meant daily. Every one of them can proudly, and without boasting, point at the map and say: "We have been everywhere."—They have!

July 8-9th the Division took over what is known as the East Poperinghe or second line in the Mont-Kemmel sector. This line was under constant observation from Kemmel, and mercilessly shelled day and night. As our details again trailed the Division, every one of these men will probably be able to tell some little story about their feelings, thoughts, and narrow escapes from some inquisitive whiz-bang. There were plenty of them, so material for such a tale ought to be abundant.

The first shell!

If it is a near-by: a sharp whistletone in the air. A crash, and an explosion with a peculiar, angry, "I-mean-business" detonation. A—anyway, the first couple of times—quick-as-lightning softening of the kneecap and an unconditional "down"—mud or no mud.

If it is a back-area shell: another, more long-drawn whistletone. In one—the crash and explosion—way back. Somehow or other it always sounds as if the projectile landed in a wood, ending its travel in a bed of branches, these dimming the noise. It almost sounds pretty.

But if it is a H. E.—one of those sweet things you don't hear until after the hit—then you just wonder that you are still alive. That's all. But it is a rather pleasant feeling at that—until the next hits—closer!

And, if the ordinary shell types were not excitement enough, there were always some unexpected gas shells to fall back on, or the "tat-tat" of a machine gun (popularly known as "the crazy carpenter"), but when that happened, one was sure to be uncomfortably near the front line. Which, as it was often very difficult to detect on account of the underground warfare, only goes to show that even a machine gun has a mission.

At our Headquarters at Oudezeele life was different. The close co-operation with the English set its mark. We had, up to then, been considered a rather neat-looking crew, usually com-

mented on both for our horses and general appearance. Our new surroundings changed this opinion entirely.

Let us admit frankly that the "Tommie" in that respect has it all over us. Each nation has its good and bad points, and the way the English troops "turn out" is certainly most remarkable. We admit our inferiority, however, with a certain pride, as but four weeks in their company were sufficient to put our equipment in such a shape that it was highly commended by the English officers.

But it naturally meant hard work. Accordingly, we began an intensive cleaning-up and polishing campaign, which, single-handed, would have won the war, if that had been the deciding factor. The craze grew to such an extent that one man is actually known to have walked almost half a mile to buy a tooth brush, but as he was put in the guardhouse the same evening for being slightly intoxicated, this might account for it. Another expressed as his sincere belief that we would be ordered out to scrub the snow white in the winter. If it hadn't been for the intermediate drills or the schools we now had to attend, there is no saying to what heights we would have risen. Any polish manufacturer could have made a fortune on our products! But the schools, drills, and details saved us.

Gasmask drill, especially, was vigorously practised. It ended up, after a month's preparation, with a graduation performance, which would have choked even Houdini. It consisted of 4 hours' continuous walk and work in the torture instrument. Let it be said, without going into further details, that 4 hours in a gasmask is just what Sherman said about war in general—hell!

But it soon proved to be a rather useful and necessary precaution. On August 5th a German night raider dropped one of their new inventions, an aeroplane gas bomb, near our camp. The wind fortunately blew the gas away, thus saving us from casualties. About the same time the schools opened their doors for our men.

Some of our N. C. O.'s went to the gas-instructor's school at Merkeghem, two went to the O. T. S., some others to the cooking school at Pont Remy, and July 22nd, a few days after the arrival of our horses and bicycles, a detail of not less than 25 men left for the 2nd A. C., M. P. school at Camp Hamerhouck, near Cassel. Some of these schools were very good, and gave besides the practical side of the course, daily lectures on this or that particular line, by experts on the various subjects. It gave us opportunities to study the "Tommies" at close range; get an idea of their way of doing things, backed up by their experience of four years of war. It was a great help in our training, and, invariably resulted in our men returning to camp with an entirely new vocabulary of English, in which words as "Para(i)de" or "Carry-on" were predominating, at the same time immensely impressed by their acquaintance with one of the British Army's most picturesque figures—the Sergeant-Maj(g)or.

About a week later some 35 men went up to the 6th and 41st

English Divisions M. P. Headquarters for the same purpose. These Headquarters, the Divisions being in the line, were situated between Abeele—Poperinghe. It meant practical experience more than anything else, our men working in pairs with the English M. P.'s, and taking over all patrols, traffic, stragglers, and battle posts in the area. And the front area, at that time, was "no bon."

It therefore didn't last very long before we had acquired some few valuable points as to how to exist in the shell-torn sector. They may be summed up in two well-known phrases: "it is no use putting your back up against a barrage, or even a lonesome 9.2," and "a man alive is, at any time, of more value than a dead." This not indicating that our men quit their posts when the shells came crashing down around them. To tell the truth, they usually stayed—when the Tommies jumped for the dugout. We believe that these were the days we began to feel an increasing and justified pride in our profession, hitherto often referred to as a "soft job." This feeling originated when we all of a sudden found ourselves alone in the landscape with some exploding whiz-bangs, while the soldiers we had just been talking to quickly disappeared to seek shelter in the ruins or trenches. The M. P.'s face death just as often as anybody else; it is only the forms of the rendezvous which are different.

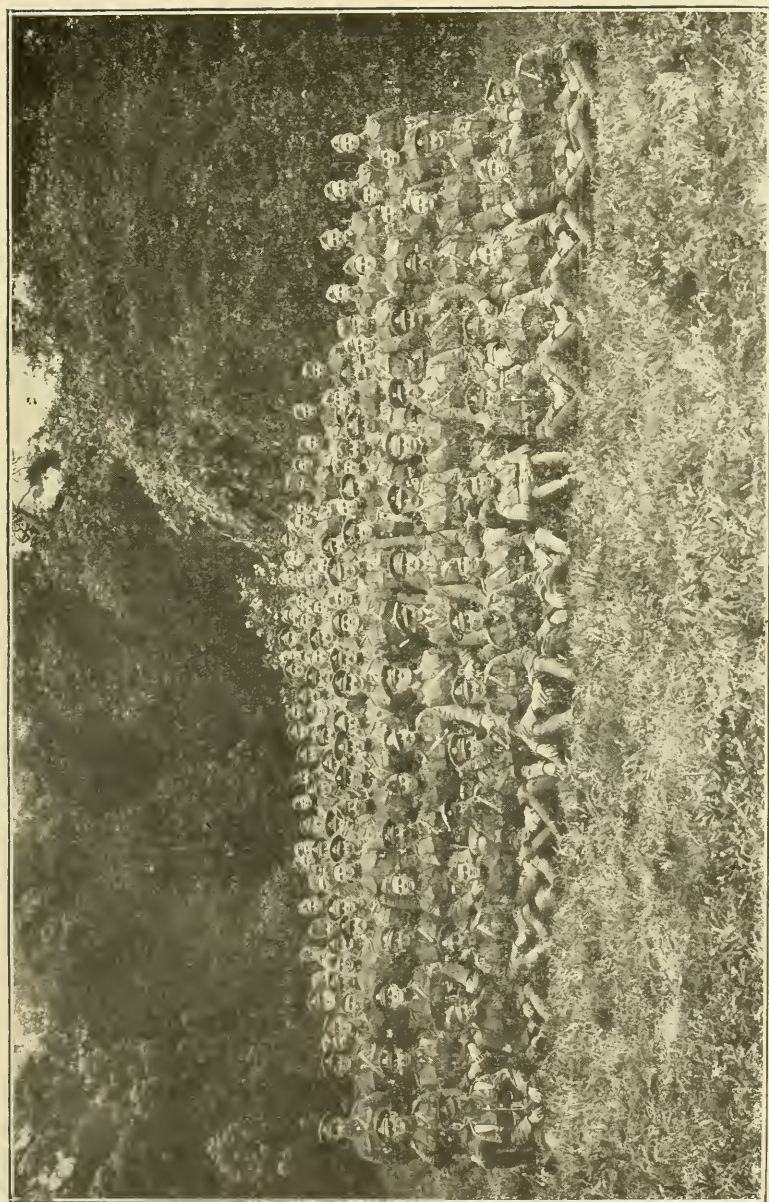
Still waiting for the expected German attack, waging the agreed-on "active defense" campaign, and with time working in our favor, the end of July found a marked change in everything.

The aeroplane branch provided the most visible and convincing proofs. There the situation had been completely reversed. Now it was "Fritz" who was bombed day and night, while his planes were hopelessly outnumbered and beaten before they even crossed "the line." His night raids, accordingly, became more and more rare.

The process of refilling and reorganizing the British forces had been completed; 52 strong divisions were available. Our superiority in artillery and tanks was growing every day. And, as the weight of the American forces at last began to tell, the Germans, on July 15th, started their new—and last—drive, east and southeast of Rheims, made some progress, and—were held. This meant the climax and change in the fortunes of the war.

It meant that the Germans had made their final effort, and failed. That their maximum strength had been passed, their reserves almost used up. July 18th General Foch launched his great counter-attack, and as soon as it was well under way, progressing favorably, the English began their drive on the entire front from Montdidier—Albert, clearing Amiens and the Paris-Albert railroad. Another blow was struck at Arras, La Basse, and the Lys salient. It was the last two which affected us and our operations.

From August 7th to 14th King George of England inspected



Group-picture from the English M. P. School at Merkeghem, Belgium

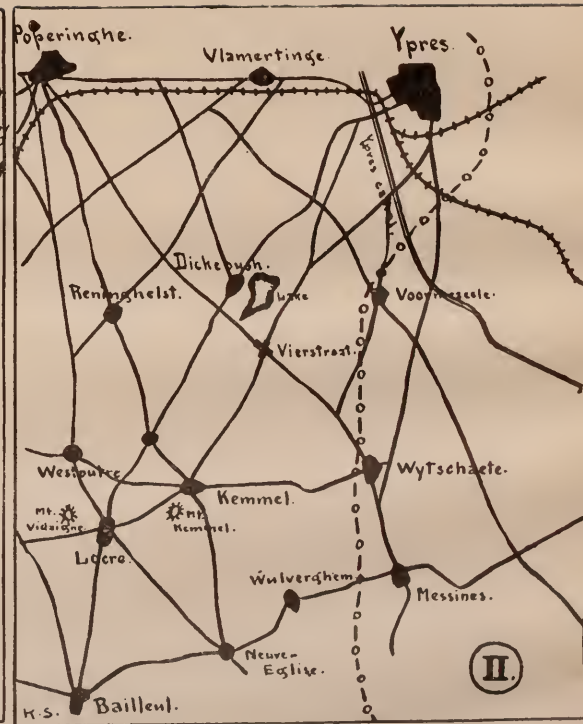
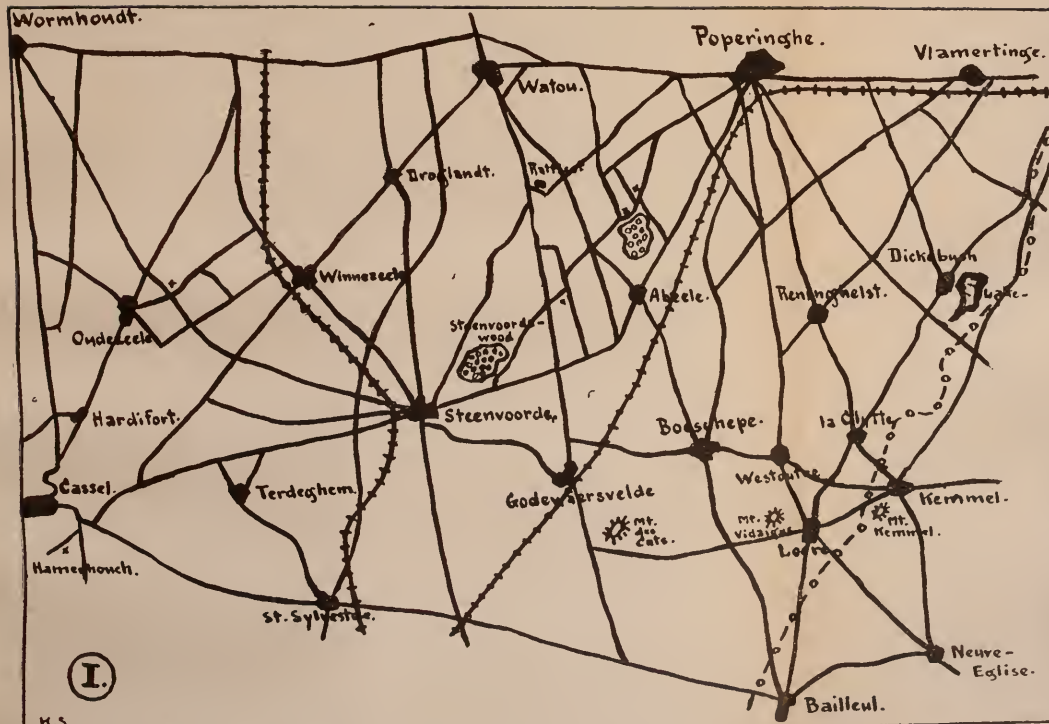
the 2nd Army Corps and the Flanders area. It meant several "spic-and-span" turnouts for us, guarding and patrolling the roads over which the royal escort were expected to proceed. We also sent representatives to the big open field-mass at Terdegghem, a memorial sermon for the 4th anniversary of the beginning of the war. A sermon which might have ended dramatically as German planes spotted the congregation, and doubtless would have ignored that it was a church service if our planes had not driven them away.

Sunday the 11th we had a local horse show at our camp at Oudezele. It was probably the first of its kind held by any A. E. F. forces abroad, and—as already referred to—won the 102nd M. P. much well-deserved praise and comment. Next day another 35 men left for the 6th and 41st Headquarters at the front, these two being considered the most valuable training grounds for our men, giving us the full benefit of experience under actual battle conditions. We were naturally only too glad for the opportunity offered, especially as we expected to take over some sector in the front line any minute.

But the training grounds east of the Droglandt road, known as the gas alert zone, was also a dangerous vacation district. South of our sector, our observers, for some time, had watched the enemy removing his advance ammunition dumps to the rear. This removal causing a marked decrease in artillery fire. On our front we were not that fortunate. There, on the contrary, it looked as if they preferred shooting away what they had instead of removing it. What looked like a sensible scheme at that, if it wasn't because it is rather unpleasant when you happen to be in the area where the excess dumping is going on. And artillery fire there was. Unceasingly they shelled every trench where it looked as if some work was going on, every patrol or dispatch rider who exposed himself to their watchful eyes. Not only from Mt. Kemmel, the German batteries there having the advantage of a perfect observation, but from the northern front as well, especially in the Nieuwpoort dunes sector. If really our artillery fire was so superior in marksmanship and quantity as the German prisoners said it is easily understood why they so willingly surrendered. Their fire could be uncomfortable enough.

The Steenvoorde road, our main artery for supplies, was probably the one which suffered most—especially in the evening between 5 and 11, these hours being the busy hours for the supply detachment at the front. But the Wateau, Abeele, Poperinghe roads were equally bad, and as we had mounted patrols and traffic posts on all these roads day and night, the narrow escapes were many.

Our Infantry, and Engineer details, who all this time had stuck doggedly to their respective outfits, had equally hard times. Forth and back they followed their Regiment like shadows. In



some cases they even went over the top with the infantry, being without definite orders as to what to do during raids or attacks. In others, they voluntarily left for the rear and brought up ammunition or supplies to their friends in the trenches, thus materially helping to bring about the remarkable revelation we gradually experienced, being considered friends and useful, instead of a "necessary evil."

These men, as said, have covered almost every inch of ground on the map. They have slept near Dickebush Lake and in Steenvoorde wood, names like Wippenhock, Reninghelst, la Clyte, Ouderdom, Scherpenberg, Lijssenthoek, and Steen-Akker sound as familiar to them as Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street to a New Yorker.

About this time, or Aug. 20-25th, reorganization rumors made their appearance in camp. The P. M. G. had just begun the reorganization of all M. P. units of the A. E. F. in France; each outfit to consist of 1 Captain (acting P. M.), 1 first, 2 second lieutenants, and 200 men. The prevailing uncertainty as to the result of this naturally created some temporary unrest and dissatisfaction, but fortunately we left for the front on Aug. 24th, distributed at Jebb Camp, Trappist Farm, and Douglas Camp, for a while forgetting all about the rumors. Our removal to the front area meant that the English M. P.'s from the 6th and 41st Divisions were withdrawn (a few days later taking over the sector south of us), leaving us in undisputed possession of their former area, more precisely the former 6th Division sector. The 27th Division at the same time, or rather on August 21st, taking over the front of the Dickebush line, covered by 30th (American) Division on the left, and 34th (English) on the right, 6th and 41st acting as reserves. The change in the line-up was completed at a time when great things were going on along the entire front. Right south of us, in the Lys salient we had made appreciable progress. The continuous "nibbling" north and south of the salient, had done its work. It began to give way! Aug. 19th English troops entered Merville, kept up the pressure, finally resulting in the enemy's general retreat on the night of Aug. 29-30th. From our camps up north we watched the fires from his burning stores and dumps all of that night, and as he evacuated Bailleul Aug. 30th and our scouts now reported suspicious activities behind Mt. Kemmel, a general advance was ordered Aug. 31st, our Division attacking in the direction of Vierstaat Ridge, southeast of Dickebush Lake.

The German Divisions opposite our sector that last week were the 236th, 8th, 53rd and 52nd Infantry Divisions, covered north by the 6th Cavalry and 1st Landwehr Division, south by the 22nd Rifle and 11th Reserve Division. The 16th (Bavarian), 207th, 31st, 18th and 58th were possible reserves, all being part of Prinz

Ruprecht's forces, and belonging to the Fourth German Army, under General v. Arnham.

Events soon proved that our scouts were right. The enemy really had begun his withdrawing, but he had left a strong rear guard of machine gun detachments to cover the retreat, these again covered by numerous field pieces, and aided by an intense cloud screen. Our advance was therefore, slow, hesitating, and cautious, so as to minimize the unavoidable losses as far as possible.

By Sept. 2nd we held a line running through Voormezele, Snipers Bahn, and the outskirts of Wytschaete to receive orders on Sept. 3rd to withdraw for a rest, and new adventures at some other part of the line.

The whole affair, ending up in a forced, still partly voluntary, retreat, and not taking shape of an actual breaking-through battle, didn't give us the full opportunity to show our real metal. But it did offer us a wonderful practical training during the trying 5 weeks in the front area, and made us familiar with the intricate details of the work at the front, hampered to a certain degree by the English supervision which, for instance, made the prisoner-of-war question, during the advance, rather complicated.

It was on one of the prisoners we found a map (we found hundreds of them later on), for the first time having a red dotted line, indicating: Der Geländegewinn bis zum Einsetzen der Feindlichen Gegenoffensiven, July 17, 1918.

Was it an omen?

Did they finally realize that they had reached their limits?



CHAPTER V

Withdrawing on the 3rd of September, we stayed in Oudezeele over night. Next morning at 4 o'clock we marched to Proven, entrained, and left Belgium. But we didn't go alone!

We brought with us some new friends we had made. Some real friends who just refused to be left behind, and laughed at our well-meant objections—the cooties!

We had met them in some dugout, tent, or Nissenhut on a cold night. They had found our company pleasant and comfortable, and made up their minds to stay. And as we didn't have any means—water being worth gold—to start an active campaign so as to prevent their entrenching warfare, they finally had it their way—and stayed!

Now cooties are not pleasant companions. To tell the truth, they are rather bothersome. They proved it satisfactorily on our trip from Belgium. And they never lost this reputation, until the showers in Le Mans had drowned the very last.

Over Calais, Bologne, Doullens we proceeded to Candas, spending most of the time on the train in a deathlike sleep. Entraining at Candas Sept. 5th, we hiked, biked, or rode to Bouquesne, this town being designated as our Headquarters, and thus found ourselves returning to well-known camping grounds, as Beauval was only a few miles away.

We were now part of the Third British Army and attached to the 2nd American Corps, a fact which didn't prevent the reorganization rumors from gaining fresh ground and getting more persistent than ever. Depression and uncertainty was therefore again in the air, but until further it only resulted in a detail of 25 men leaving for the 2nd Corps, located at Beauval.

Details left for all the 27th Division towns: Doullens, Halloy, Famechon, Thierres, Orville, Amplier, Authieule, Freschevillers, Terramisnil, Caumesuil, Raincheval, and Puchevillers. Our mounted patrols and bicycle details took care of the roads. The 102nd Train Headquarters, to which we had formerly belonged, severed the connections, consolidated themselves as an independent office. This resulted in several changes of the commanding officer—finally settled by the appointment of Colonel Taylor.

Sept. 18-19th we were called on to participate in a big maneuver. The problem consisted in distribution and replacing of forces, the arrangement of dispatch and communication service during an imaginary advance through a "spent" Division, taking over their line, and continue their advance. The advance starting out

from Berneuil, where Division Headquarters was supposed to be situated, driving eastwards. The days previously, tank attacks, alone or in connection with Infantry, had been demonstrated for the Division. There couldn't therefore be very much doubt as to what the whole arrangement meant. It meant back to the line—and "toot sweet"! Back, under entirely new conditions, to a place where open field fighting was the menu of the day. An information, which in itself didn't give much of a hint as to where that would be, as the Germans everywhere were on the retreat. A guess, however, was permitted.

The best and most deadly point for a break-through attack would be a point bringing us dangerously close to their depot centers and retreat line. Wherefore, as everybody knows that Maubeuge was the pivot, and cork in the bottle neck leading back to the Rhine, it logically ought to be somewhere between Queant and St. Quentin. This—to use a boxing phrase—would be "a right uppercut to the jaw."

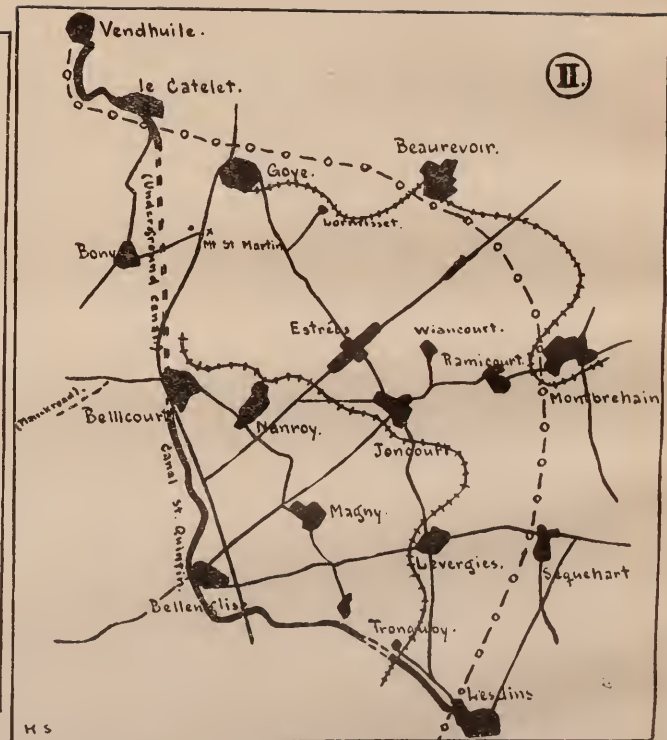
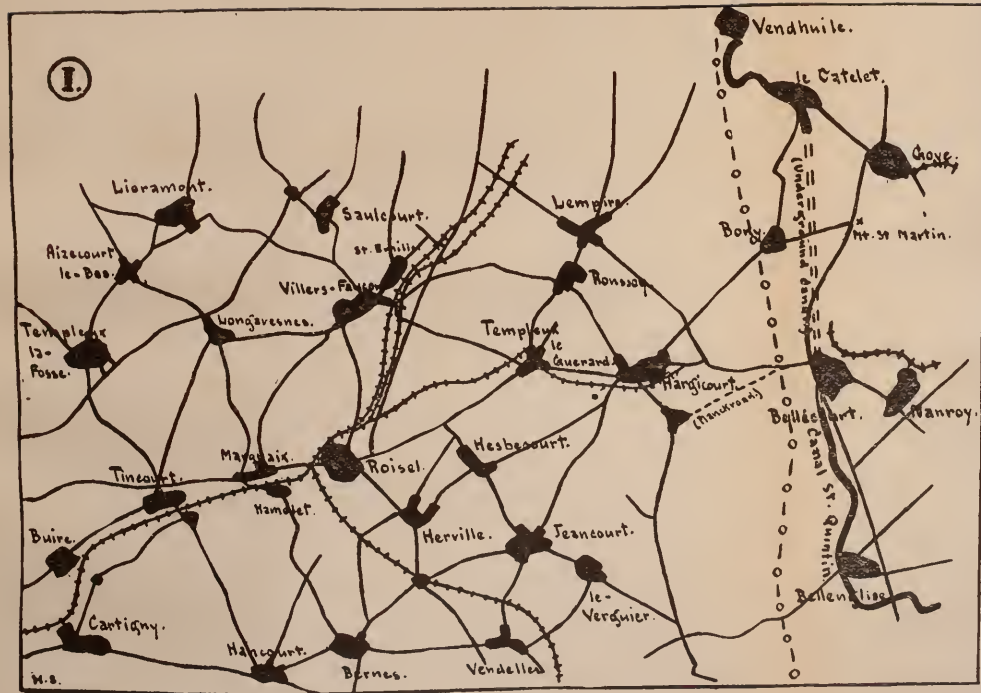
The prospects for the success of such a drive seemed justified, as the operations against "the Hindenburg switch," east of Cambrai, on Sept. 2, had been extraordinarily successful.

It would sever the German communications to an unbearable degree, and, if progressing as we hoped, practically cut the German Army in two—provided they didn't retreat in time.

The guess proved to be fairly right. Sept. 23rd we entrained from Authieule, spent an arctic-cold night in our well-known box cars, gently comforted by the cooties, to find ourselves next morning (24th), shivering and half starved, in the wrecked ruins of what was formerly a town called Tincourt. German signboards, everywhere, stared into our eyes. Gas sifted from sewers and water-filled shell craters, filling the air with a peculiar smell, which spelled danger. Human bodies or horse carcasses stuck out from beneath the brick piles; here an arm, there a leg. Sometimes it looked as if the arm or leg was all that was left. Maybe it was, who knows?

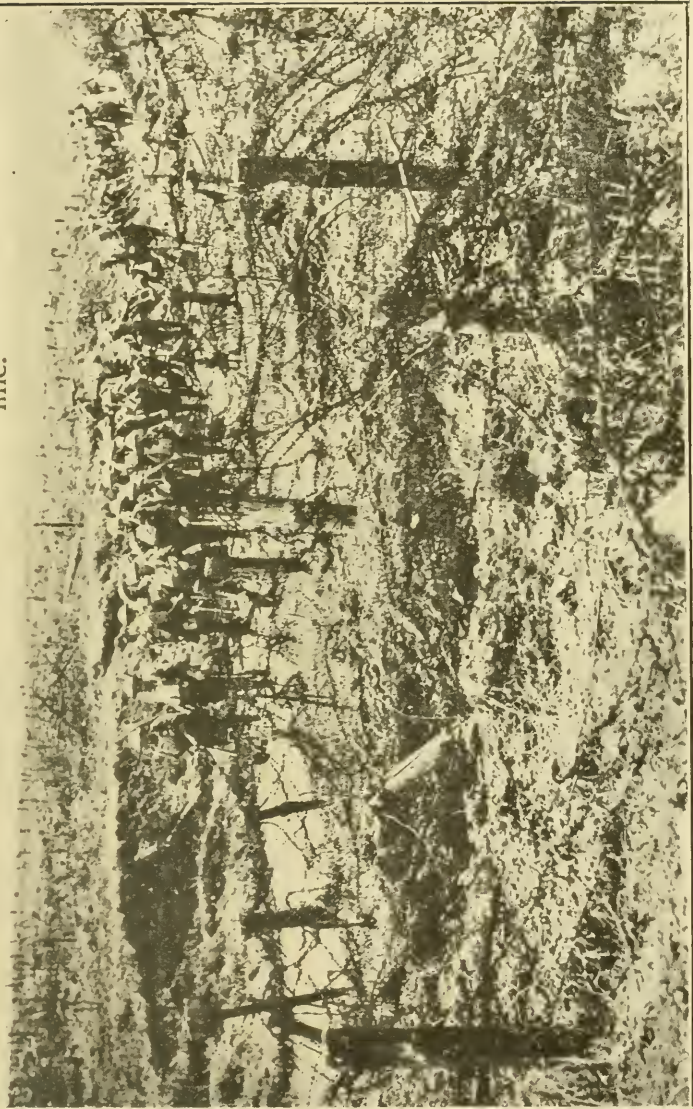
A driving rain broke loose. We formed and marched north. The bicycles stuck or clogged up in the deep mud, so that this detachment soon was left behind, most of the way carrying the impractical steel horses on their backs with the rest of their equipment. But the rest kept up the march through another brick and lumber pile—once the town of Longavesnes—north over roads sown with deserted Jerry-dugouts, arms and gasmasks, and at last arrived at Aizecourt las Bas about 7 A. M.; our headquarters for a day or two.

Our mounted men had already arrived the night before. They left Beauquesne the 21st with the Division transports and trains using the Amiens Highway, moving at night and resting during



— o — o — shows German line. Fig. I the situation before the attack.
Fig. II by October 2nd

Bobwire entanglement defense before the Hindenburg
line.



the day, to avoid discovery. It was an imposing convoy, composed of some 600 vehicles and 2,200 animals, stayed over at Bray the first day, arrived at St. Denis on the 23rd, dispersed, our men proceeding to Templeux la Fosse, and leaving again at daybreak for our assigned camp site at Aizecourt le Bas, where we met them.

Finding another big assortment of German dugouts and piles of sheetiron near our camp, it didn't take us long to make life comfortable. Our requirement at that stage being only a hole in the ground for shrapnel and bombshelter and our shelterhalf, or some of the ironsheets over, to protect us against the rain. It most probably wouldn't appeal to the average man under normal conditions, but to us it looked like a five-room apartment with bath.

At that it must have appeared rather picturesque, situated as it was on a hillside. A near-sighted professor would have stopped to examine this new specie of field rats or moles, which was about what it looked like. A German military graveyard just around the roadbend and the restless walking around of the "Fieldgray" in the Prisoner of War cage at the foot of the hill cheerfully reminding us "they" too had their hardships and casualties. A thing we didn't doubt for a minute. We sincerely hoped so! And again our never-ceasing patrol—traffic—and guard duty began, meeting difficulties exceeding our previous experiences by hundreds and hundreds of per cent. The towns, rather the crossroads, for the towns hardly existed, of Lieramont, Saulcourt, Longavesnes, Templeux la Fosse, Villers-Faucon, St. Emilie, Marquaix, Tincourt, and Roisel were "besetzt," as the Germans call it. And our German was improving immensely. The Division Headquarters detail left for Bois de Buire, where Headquarters resided, and an advance-guard for the Templeux le Guerard district, where the Division Prisoner of War cage would be located when the attack started. And there was no doubt either that it was going to be some battle too.

The roads were jammed with traffic. Men and more men, horses and still more horses, lorries and ever so many more lorries, ambulances, ammunition, supply and guns roared and boiled there as a river, ceaselessly, day and night, moving to and from the front.

Sept. 27th our main body moved up to the Chalkpits at Templeux (F. 26. d, 8. 3.), now almost "comfortable," as the German line had been pressed back some the last few days, meaning that only about eight shells crashed into the dale behind every five minutes. And that isn't much—if they don't hit. A new assortment of German dugouts were selected and inhabited. The white paint for the expected Jerry prisoners got a last stir; and the evening of the 28th found us strong and ready, although shivering with cold, on the threshold—that at least we knew—of a big battle.

But no man's land is a goblin sight
When patrols crawl over at dead o' night;
Boche or Belgian, British or French,
You dice with death when you cross the trench.

When the "rapid," like fire-flies in the dark,
Flits down the parapet spark by spark,
And you drop for cover to keep your head
With your face on the breast of the four months' dead.

This is not meant to be a finished description of the battle, for which our space is too limited and our words too colorless, but I wonder if we will ever forget the hell-like change from the comparative quietness up to five-fifty that morning, to the nerve-breaking noise when the barrage opened up. The nervous tension and restlessness which caught everybody with an iron grip, knowing that our infantry had left the jumping-off trench, gone over the top, and started out on their dangerous adventure.

The wonderful color scheme, produced by the daybreak, the smoke, the signal-flares, shell explosions, mud, and dust clouds, and—the overworked imagination. The whirl of the aeroplanes going over "the line," the scraping sound from the long row of tanks, when they threw their mammoth bodies over the nearest crest and wrung their way forwards through the noise and smoke compound, as a procession of pre-historic monsters, creaking and puffing under the strain.

The smell—sour, sticky, unexplainable—strangely reminding you of the breeze which swept down on you from the scene, when you witnessed your first theater performance.

And later——

The hatred and pain you felt when some of ours—men, animals or machines—were hit.

The sight of the endless, heart-breaking line of wounded, painfully dragging themselves to the rear, or being brought in on a blood-dripping stretcher, maimed and dirty beyond recognition, unbroken in spirit, and with an ever-ready smile.

No Zola or Flaubert could ever write it, because no words are strong enough. No painter—well, Veretchagin came close, but, then again, pictures don't move.

And this is all movements, changes in expression and positions. Ugly, terrible, nightmare changes in this cruel, sardonic battle with death. And then—the discovery—a discovery, which usually comes very late—that you yourself are in a condition of a half daze, which, invisible to others and hardly noticed by yourself, makes you almost unconscious of the dangers, covers your nerves with an unexplainable "something" which makes you proof against the horrors around you, dopes you to forget, and hardly think about things which otherwise would make the gamest sick to the core.

That you, practically unaffected, are doing your work, fever-

ishly looking for any and all opportunities to lend a hand, not only because your heart is in it and you want to do your bit, but because it is the only way to minimize a dreadful feeling of helplessness which tortures your heart, seeing all the suffering around you and being so utterly at bay, as to how to relieve it.

But—to leave the fiction part of it, and consider the military problem, the battle of Sept. 29-30th, best known as the battle for the Hindenburg Line—really started on the 27th, or, to be very correct, on the night of the 26-27th, when a heavy bombardment opened up along the whole front of the I, III and IVth English Army Corps, followed by a preliminary attack by the I and III Corps, so as to deceive the enemy as to the place where the real attack would fall. On the 27th the two American divisions (the 27th and 30th), now part of the IVth English Army Corps, reinforced and supported with tanks and covered by the usual artillery and machine gun barrage, attempted some minor attacks, whose only object was to straighten out some bends in our line and dislodge the enemy from his strong advance posts in front of the St. Quentin Canal, an important link in the “Hindenburg-stellung.” Our efforts were especially concentrated around Guillemont and Quennemont farms, and succeeding in these operations which doubtless prepared the Germans for what was coming—an information they couldn’t use to much advantage, as the unceasing bombardment kept them in the dugouts and tunnels, and made it almost impossible for them to bring up supplies—the 28th was used as a rest-day before the big attack. At 5:50 in the morning on September 29th the real battle started. A battle which unfortunately was going to cost the Division so dear, but at the same time give us a glorious name. The German Divisions opposite our front were the 2nd Prussian Guard—232d, 54th, 185th, 121st and 75th I. D., and on the second day the 24th and 34th. Two of these Divisions had been reorganized, so that for instance 153rd Infantry Regiment—our old friends from Mt. Kemmel and then part of the 8th Prussian Division—now was part of the 121st.

North and south the 21st, 20th and 5th Reserve Divisions were to be found, while the Alpine Corps—202d, 108th, 50th, 243rd, 232nd, 80th and 13th Divisions—who most of them had been in the line previous to our appearance—were possible reserves.

On our side the 27th and 30th American, 3rd and 5th Australian, and 46th, 1st and 6th Divisions of the 9th British Corps participated, covered by the 4th and 5th Corps of the 3rd British Army Corps on our left, and the 10th French Army on our right. As the battle is history and probably later on will be described in full by men in possession of all the necessary information, it is useless to go into too many details, but—as the position, by the experts, has been claimed to be one of the very strongest in the Hindenburg system—it is only fair to give an idea of the obstacles

The 27th Div. on its way to break the Hindenburg line
Sept. 29th, 1918.



which had to be overcome. Our line, on the morning of the 29th, ran approximately as indicated on the accompanying map. The 27th Division facing Bony and Mt. St. Martin, the 12th and 18th (Engineers), Vendhuille, further north; 30th Division, Bellicourt and Nanroy; the 46th (English), Bellenglise, and the 1st and 6th (English) Division further south, with the 3rd and 5th Australians moving up close behind the Yankee Divisions, who were expected to meet the hardest resistance.

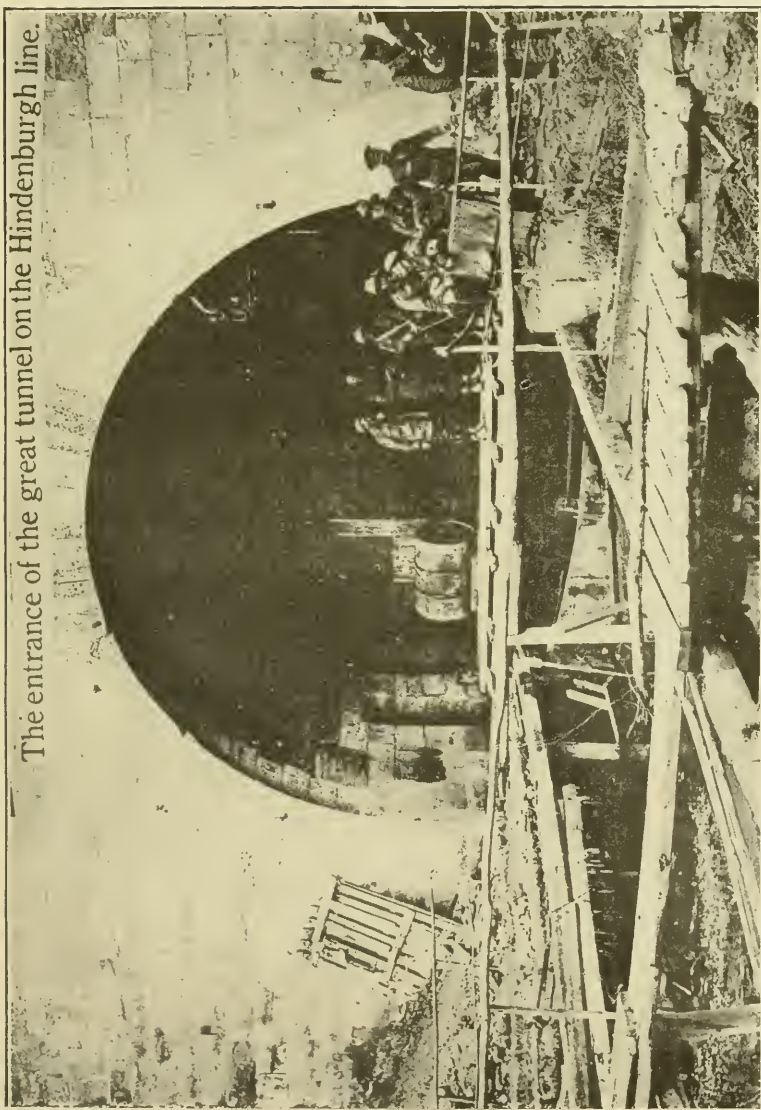
A canal called the St. Quentin Canal ran parallel with the front in its entire length, passing through an underground tunnel from Vendhuille to Bellecourt, and from there on and south gradually working its way out until it, a little north of Bellenglise, reaches practically level soil. From Bellicourt, and for about a mile, the canal cutting is very steep, at some places some 75 feet, but—contrary to general belief—the canal itself was hardly meant to be the main defense line, but only drawn in as a valuable link in their deep defense system, extending from the first barbed-wire line, 2,000 yards west of the canal, to the Beaufort-Fonsomme positions, located about a mile behind the original Hindenburg line running through the sugar factory northeast of Nanroy.

The tunnel itself was a roomy and bombproof shelter for troops at rest, at the same time serving as shelter during the preliminary bombardment for the trench forces, being connected with these by numerous shafts and tunnels, while naturally the top of the canal cuttings were sown with machine gun emplacements, both of the concrete and open-field type.

Another wire entanglement ran 1,000 yards behind the first line, immediately in front of the canal, both of them covered by the machine guns on the canal edge, and the numerous minor defense behind and between, all of it under direct fire from the original Hindenburg positions and Beaufort-Fonsomme line.

The whole system extended to a depth of almost 12,000 yards. After our first set-back, caused by a deadly enfilading machine gun fire from the towns, which had been passed through too quickly by our gallant, fast-advancing infantry, nothing could stop us. The St. Quentin Canal was crossed, the impregnable Hindenburg line broken from le Catelet to Lesdin, a terrible hole dented in the German defense system, and the pressure so unceasingly forced home that October 2nd saw us in possession of Goye, Lormisset, Wiancourt, Ramicourt, Precelles, and Levergies, in a rather uncomfortable position, that's true, harassed as we were by the German artillery, now taking due advantage of *their* opportunity to punish our left flank, but confident as to the final result, knowing as we did that we could count on reserves.

How terrible the German losses had been can best be ascertained by the fact that the 54th Division and what was left of the 2nd Prussian Guard were all that was still in the line of the Enemy



Divisions which had faced us on the opening day, the vacant places being taken over by the 21st, 119th (part), 84th, 241st and 25th Reserve Divisions.

And on the 2nd of October the Division returned to the back area for a much-needed rest, leaving the stage for somebody else for a few days.

As the physiognomy, objects, and results of the battle have now been given, it is about time to memorize our part in "the big stunt."

Of course, we all had an idea from the Belgian front what M. P.'s meant to the success and welfare of a modern army. But then again, our engagements there had only been minor operations compared with this. Now we knew!

The way we kept the traffic going was—so we have been told by the authorities—excellent, to say the least. And, don't forget, the M. P.'s have a far better chance to be blamed than commended for their work. Everything goes right; well, that is only what is expected, and, naturally, does not extract any praise.

But—things may go wrong! A direct hit changes a lorry to kindling-wood, sends the horses down in a sprawling heap. The traffic is blocked.

It is not your fault, sure enough, but when Authority appears on the scene, the chances are nine out of ten that the verdict invariably will be guilty. It is only human judgment, one of the curses of our service.

When our outfit could go through an affair like the Hindenburg battle with a traffic-congestion as the one we met those days, hampered by the intense shell fire, the muddy, worn-out roads and natural, ever-present nervousness and confusion, without any serious breakdowns, it is more than luck—it is efficiency.

There is no reason in the world concealing that our traffic men, mounted and dismounted patrols, straggler, and battlepost details, who, stretched out over the entire area covering Tincourt, Roisel, Templeux le Guerard, Saulcourt, Villers-Faucan, St. Emilie, Lempire, Basse-Boulogne, Ronssoy, and Duncan post, the connecting roads, including those leading forward into enemy territory as far as it was possible to go, and who all lent a hand to this all-important question, did work which was imminent in its morbid, ceaseless execution, and placed the 102nd M. P. on par with any similar organization, anywhere, regardless of nationality, or whatever advantage they might have of more experience.

Our handling of prisoners—also commented on—must likewise have been very good. Unlike our English, French, or Australian colleagues, our men, following our infantry closely, immediately relieved these of their prisoners, escorted them to the Division cage, from which they were sent to the Corps Cage after due searching, marking, registering, and identification. Some 14 officers and 600 men was our Division's share. While a job we

all silently hated—collecting and handing over to the respective Headquarters of “stragglers”—was made pleasantly easy for us by the almost incredible small number of such we encountered.

These being our assigned duties—besides, of course, as always being considered a living information bureau, expected to know the locations of the numerous Division, Brigade, Regimental, Battery, and Battalion Headquarters, the whereabouts of this or that Army unit in the line, even down to Platoons or Companies, the positions of Batteries, Supply and Ammunition Dumps, Ambulance Companies and Dressing Stations—a problem which in itself is extremely difficult, as such locations often change three or four times a day during a battle—these being our assigned duties, our men, however, didn't stop there.

Dead tired from want of sleep—for our outfit was taxed so heavily that relief was practically impossible, and 48 to 72 hours at a stretch was a rule rather than an exception; starving, for in a battle like this, the rations for the human material is only second consideration—our men would continuously be found everywhere, aiding the walking wounded on the dreary, painful way to the Dressing Stations, trying to comfort them and cheer them up, locating the dead bodies or unfortunate wounded who had fallen in some obscure, hidden place, where they might otherwise have detected discovery and help. Clearing the roads of their sorrowful obstacles of dead bodies of men or horses, of the splintered lorries, gun carriages, tanks, or field pieces. The 102nd M. P.'s won the doughboys' admiration on those very days, and—we do not consider a higher reward possible.

As our casualties at the front on those strenuous days only consisted of seven slightly wounded or gassed, we would indeed have been a happy bunch when we were finally withdrawn, if an incident, which for once makes us break our rule of not mentioning any names, had not weighed heavily on our minds—the death of Callahan.

Guarding an important crossroad near Saulcourt, he was hit by an aeroplane bomb about 7 o'clock in the evening on Sept. 26th from one of the numerous German night raiders who harassed our lines of communications day and night, on the days previous to the attack. We are happy to know—when he did have to pay the extreme sacrifice—that he died instantly. He was buried the following day at Templeux la Fosse with military honors, and his memory will be treasured by all of us as a splendid comrade and fine soldier.

CHAPTER VI

Relieved by the Australians at midnight, October 1-2nd, we remained in the Templeux Quarry until 8 A. M., October 2nd. A detail was left at Ronssoy to pick up possible stragglers. Our permanent Division Headquarters details remained at Bois de Buire and Tincourt. The rest of the outfit retired to Aizecourt le Bas, next morning proceeding to Peronne—as we thought, for a long rest.

Peronne was, of course, the usual heap of ruins. The former Cathedral, so famous and beautiful, a mere mountain of brick, marble and colored glass fragments. The tumbledown pillars and century-old woodwork giving a faint idea of its former splendor—and the extent and quality of German “kultur.”

In some houses, which—miraculously—had stood up during the bombardments, we put up for the night for a change and novelty sleeping in German-made beds, found stored away in the cellars. When we had put them together we turned in and enjoyed the first good night's sleep in nine days, undisturbed by inquisitive bombs, “toot-sweeteners,” “whiz-bangs,” or “coal-boxes.” It was very kind, “Fritz”; we thank you! We fooled you that time!

Our rest, however, shouldn't be long. Things were going so favorably that it was only a matter of keeping up the pressure, prevent the enemy from getting the rest he so sorely needed, and the crack was bound to come, sooner or later.

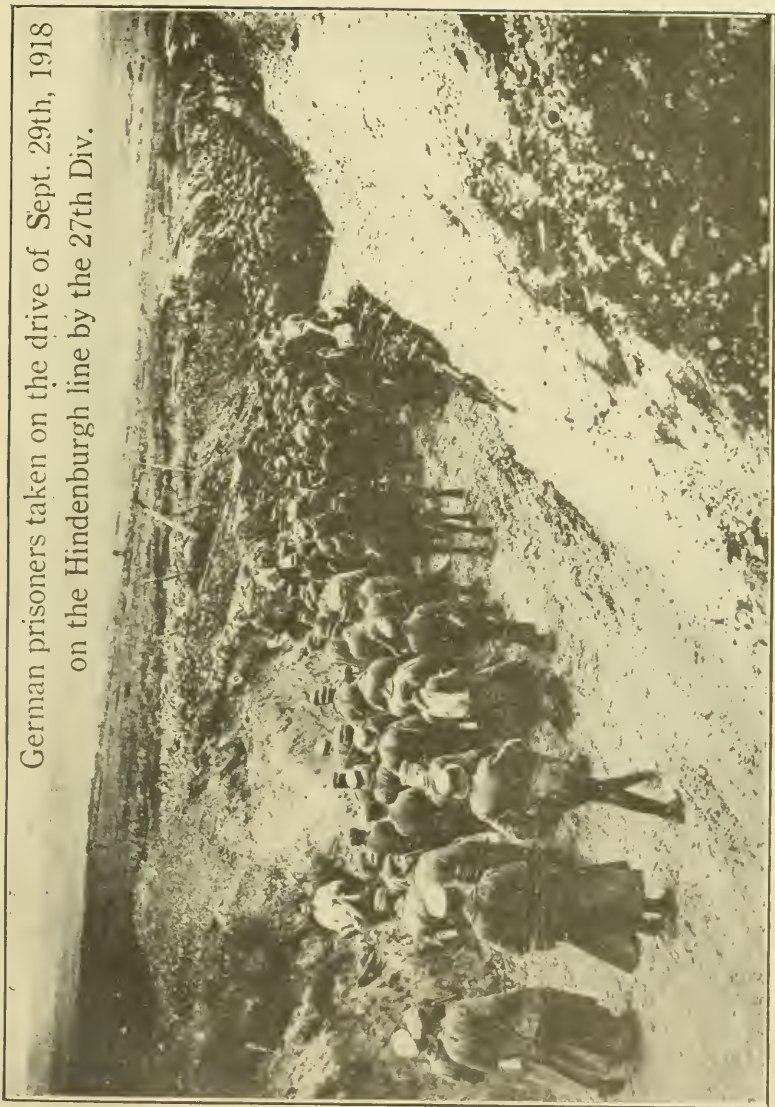
The following day, therefore, already saw us in activity again. A mounted detail returned to Ronssoy, picked up the detail there and advanced to Villeret (or Hargicourt—it was almost impossible to distinguish). Another went to la Chapelette, reporting to the II American Corps Replacement Camp.

October 5th saw our Headquarters in Roisel, quartered in an old condemned English Prisoner of War cage, again listening to the familiar sound of the 4.2, 5.9, 7.5 and 9.2's, mixed with an occasional aeroplane bomb around 10 P. M. as a fitting period for the day's diary.

And October 6th, Tincourt, Roisel, Herville, Hesbecourt, Jeancourt, Templeux le Guerard, Hargicourt, Villeret, le Verguier, and all important crossroads and road switches were covered by our men once more.

The shelling in the area was worse than ever. The Germans still held on stubbornly north of le Catelet and shelled the country mercilessly and with an accuracy, easily explained by their long residence, before we took over the flat. Walls and covers were razed

German prisoners taken on the drive of Sept. 29th, 1918
on the Hindenburg line by the 27th Div.



away with a regularity far from assuring. Those were indeed the days of miraculous escapes.

Doubtless our problem and success in keeping the traffic going on the all-depending "plank road" from Villeret-Hargicourt to Bellecourt was at that time our finest achievement. "The Plank-road"—as the name indicates—was a rough, lumber-bridge road laid out over the swamps, replacing the old roads leading east from Hargicourt, these being either worn out, destroyed or useless on account of fire. It was practically the only road over which the supply for at least five Divisions (among these the 30th American, preparing for a new advance on the 8th) with an artillery running into thousands of guns, could be brought up. It was a problem calling for a cool head, initiative, and nerves of steel.

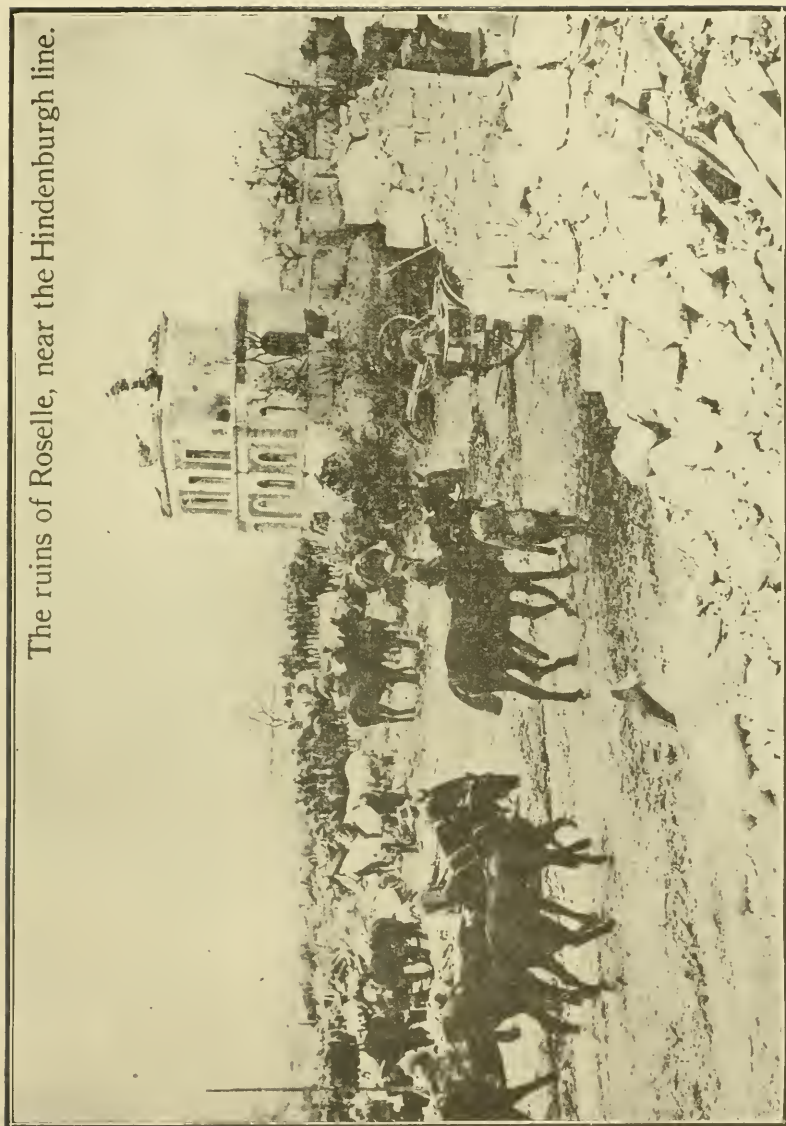
The traffic was tremendous; slow beyond despair. The two opposite-moving animal and truck lines could hardly pass each other. Sometimes they would come to a dead stop, when a vehicle slid out from the boards into a shell crater. Sometimes to a halt for a full hour when a shell hit the road, splintering men, mules, horses and lorries, and barred the way for the thousands behind, anxiously scouting for the next shell, while they impatiently waited for the ambulances and repair crew to make up for the damage. Fortunately the direct hits were comparatively few. But that the enemy didn't put down a barrage the entire length of the road will probably forever remain a mystery to all concerned, so much more as they were in a position to do so—their line running almost parallel with the road from le Catelet to Montbrehain. They, without a doubt, knew its importance and the immense congestion, that the destruction would mean a serious breakdown of communication for our attacking forces; only a paralyzing confusion on his own part seems to explain the enemy's failure to take full advantage of this remarkable opportunity.

October 7th Headquarters moved up to Bellecourt, leaving most of our details where they were. As we remained there a few days, we had time to look around and explore. The St. Quentin tunnel naturally being the first object for investigation. It was here it dawned on us how low the morale was getting in the Imperial Army, because that such positions could be taken was almost beyond belief. But the graveyard was probably the place attracting the most attention. It was the first time we had seen Jerry use graves as dugouts. Deliberately blown them up, thrown the corpses out and "entrée"—all ready for the tenant. All provided that it wasn't too much bother getting the dead owner up—in which case, he just stayed. Why, it was only a dead corpse!

It was in Bellecourt, too, we discovered that rats are intelligent, almost in possession of "musical sense." Yes, sir!

They know the difference between a "whiz-bang" and a "toot-sweeter." Knew that ordinarily the last meant some kind of bar-

The ruins of Roselle, near the Hindenburgh line.



rage fire, that what was left of the house most likely would crash down in a few minutes. Accordingly they squeaked miserably when the first "toot" whistled in the air. It sounded ugly—especially if the rat was gassed; but it didn't keep us awake many minutes at that.

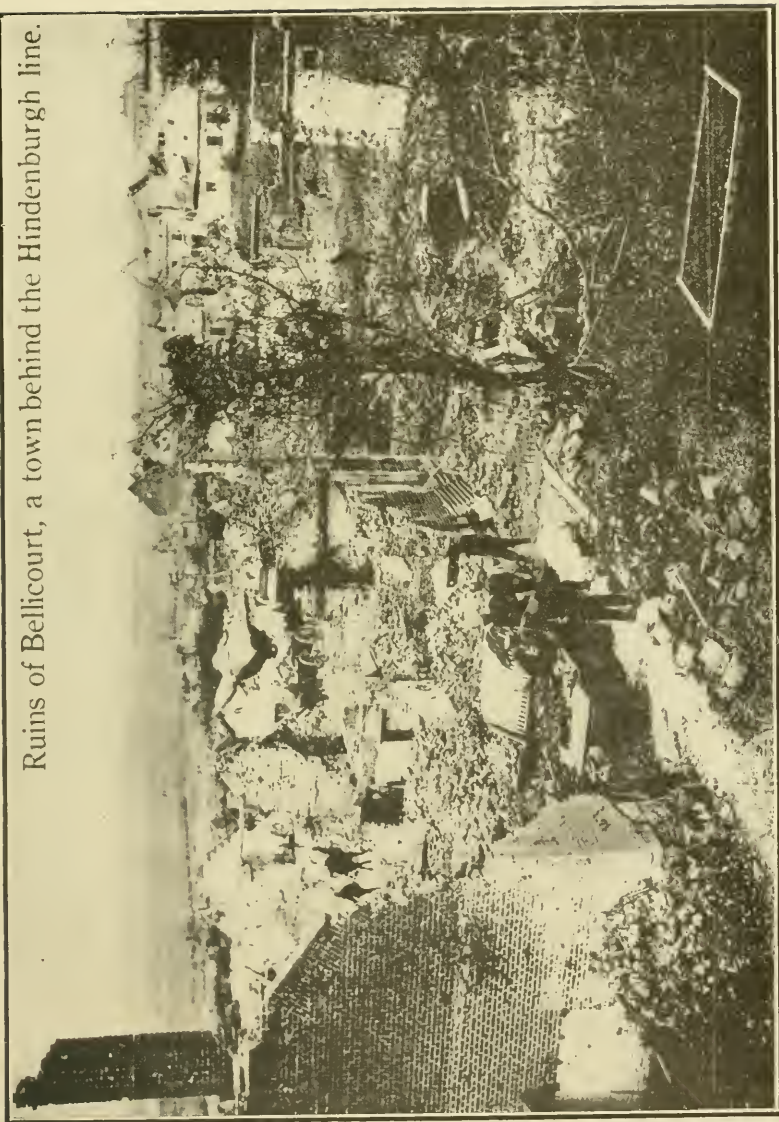
And all this time we slowly but surely pressed the enemy back, now in a slight northeasterly direction. The 30th Division, fighting with the 66th and 25th (English), took Brancourt, Serain, and Premont on October 8th. On the 9th we passed through or entered Busigny, Becquigny, Escaufourt, and Bohain, clearing the area in front of this new line to such an extent that the important St. Quentin-Busigny-Cambrai railroad was available by October 12th, and following the advance closely, our mounted and dismounted men—reinforced by our details left behind and now called in (except the Roisel, Division Headquarters and Replacement detail)—in the same space of time crept up through Nanroy, Estrees, Magny, Joncourt, Waincourt, Precelles, and Levergies to Ramicourt, Montbrehain, and Brancourt.

The evening of October 11th a dispatch rider notified the different units to report at Brancourt next day. October 12th found the entire outfit assembled there.

Meantime, a considerable change in our surroundings had taken place. Previously we had fought in country over which the fortunes of victory had wavered forth and back, completely erasing and annihilating every sign of previous life.

With our entrance of Estrus-Joncourt these conditions changed. The country we now operated in had for four years undisputed been under the German yoke. The civilian population, provided useless for any military purpose, had been permitted to remain, being more valuable for the German Army this way, to be sent to the rear hurriedly when we forced them to withdraw. As our artillery, as far as possible, spared the towns, the houses there offered considerably better quarters than we were used to. The hurried retreat left beds and mattresses for our convenience, chairs, tables and stoves, in one case even a piano, from which Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, and ragtime floated out in the night for four hours straight, relief immediately being provided when the artist threatened to break down under the strain. Brancourt was typical of a town in this stage. But was the town itself fairly well preserved, the outskirts easily made up for it; especially south of the town, near the civilian and German military graveyards. The sights there gave ample answers why German machine gunners were such rare specimens in our P. of W. batches. Crew after crew was lying killed in a heap over their guns. They were our enemies and had doubtless caused us heavy losses, but it was impossible but to admire them, and wonder what the rest of the Imperial army would

Ruins of Bellicourt, a town behind the Hindenburg line.

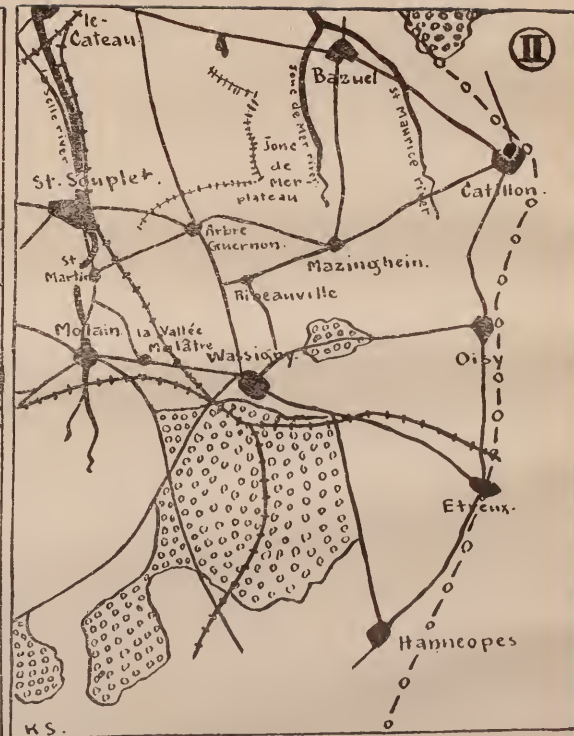
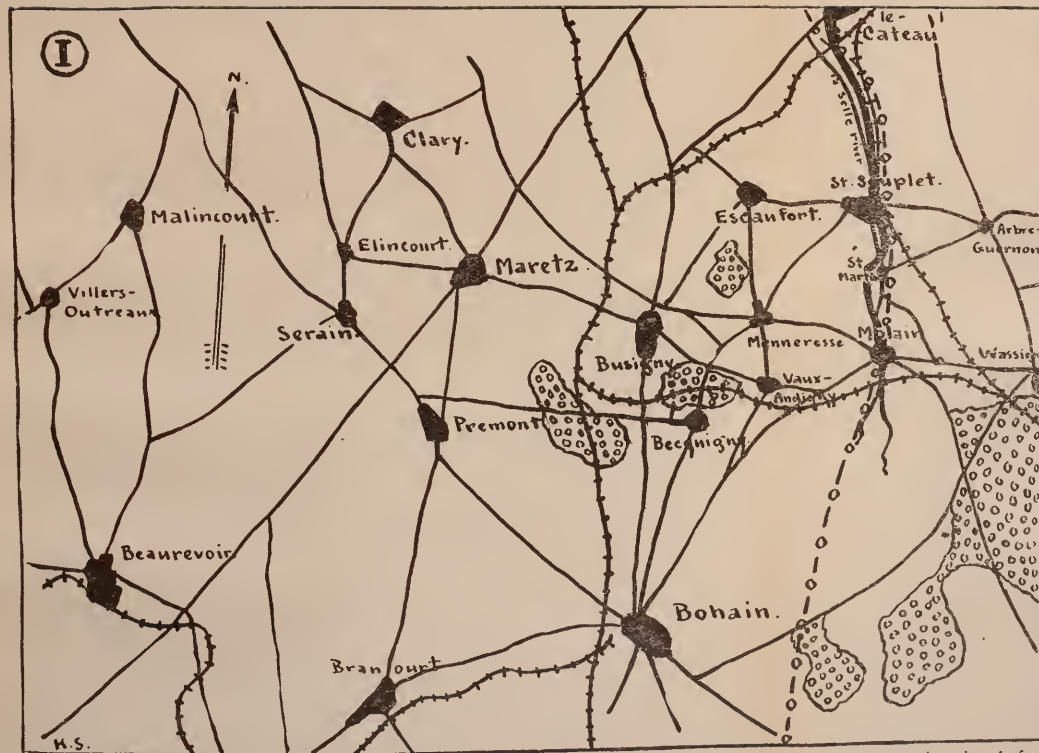


do if they didn't have men like these to cover their retreat and delay our advance.

As Captain Ackerly had been transferred to the 107th Infantry, Captain Dieges from the 102nd Engineers took over the vacancy, and the same evening, already late, our exhausted men had to pull out again, as we received orders to have Bohain, Busigny and Becquigny covered before 5:45 next morning. About midnight the 60 men left. It was a nasty trip, pitch dark, raining and cold. Walking straight for Bohain, the Premont road being momentarily shelled, they fell in the shell holes continuously, stumbled over wire or bodies. Roads hardly existed, and if they did were impossible to trace in the rain and dark, except when the gun flashes lit up the night for a second or two. From Bohain and north they walked parallel with the German lines for two miles, gas shells whistling overhead and spraying out behind them. But fortunately they escaped discovery by the German machine guns, and were at the assigned stations in time—to find the attack postponed.

Early in the morning, on October 13th, our Headquarters and main force, leaving a detail in Premont, moved up to Busigny, a rather unhealthy resort. Our kitchen was welcomed by shells, taking the corner off the next house and splintering a beautiful glass veranda. The mess line, just formed, disappeared mysteriously; and for a whole day it was a matter of serious consideration if stew, prepared under more peaceful surroundings, but guaranteed free for glass and bricks, wouldn't be more preferable. By evening the question had been settled. None as yet killed or wounded, the kitchen crew gamely stuck to their job. It made us sure of our daily stew—the stew, everything considered, being the only thing we will never forgive them. Division Headquarters was hit in the afternoon, with the result of two officers killed and three or four men wounded. A British picket line, after considerable casualties in men and horses, forced to move. Our men on posts 5 and 6 had to seek cover continuously, post 5 virtually being evacuated twice, condemned by the Department of Health.

The streets, roads, railroad, dressing stations and church (where we had a guard over the stolen gold—and silverware, nicely packed in boxes and trunks and addressed to officer—relations in “der Vaterland”) got their share of the regular bombardment, and made the gamest look around for a cellar which would give some protection against “der eisener fist.” But finding a cellar was one thing, and being able to get down into it, something else. Hundreds of refugees from the town itself—Menneresse, St. Souplet, Escaufourt and Vaux-Andigny—had already packed them far above their capacity. We sent about 1,000 of them back to Roisel and another 100 to C. C. S., during the following days. Nevertheless, we did find a few roomy and empty. But a lighted match soon explained the reason for this startling discovery. They were filled



— o — o — German line. Fig. I shows situation before attack.
Fig. II by October 21st

with water—1 to 2 feet dirty, stinking slum—and our friends, the rats.

Again we doubt human beings ordinarily would appreciate their comfort. We found them worth a couple of millions, placed a couple of barrels in the lake, boards over, and slept soundly, dreaming about Venice and gondolas. Having already daily sent out patrols, our mounted men doing most of this preliminary work, toward St. Souplet, St. Martin and Vaux-Andigny, the towns being the final object, and an impossible one, as they were all in reality "no man's land," the battle at last started October 17th, to last for four days. Saying the battle is not quite correct. It was really two independent battles, ending up in some obstinate rearguard actions, until the English, on October 21st, when our Division was "spent," again took up the burden, forcing home a new attack on a great scale.

The object on the first day was to force the la Sele River, as the St. Quentin canal stubbornly defended on account of its value as a tank defense, and on the second, when the crossing had been successfully carried out, to carry the Jonc de Mer ridge, covering the ground immediately in front and north of Arbre Guernon, a part of the defense system known as the Wotan line.

Strong as this position undeniably was, it was a natural stronghold more than anything else. The proposed defense system had not been completed, the trench and wire lines were only partly constructed, but the wooded and rolling country, as already said, lent itself admirably to a defensive campaign.

As the German divisions we fought against at the Hindenburg line were more or less wiped out, we faced an entire new line-up, although the 84th and 122nd Infantry Regiments, or rather what was left of them (formerly with the 54th Division), had been consolidated with the 478th and 479th Infantry Regiments into a new Division called the 243rd. This, the 3rd Naval (hurried down from Cambrai), 17th Rifle (including another of the regiments from the 8th Prussian Division, Mont Kemmel—the 72nd Infantry Regiment), 204th, 24th and 15th Rifles (25th, 69th Infantry Regiment and the "Tilsitz Landsturm"), were our opponents.

All of these Divisions had recently been reorganized, some of them for Heaven only knows what time, but at any rate so often that the men hardly knew their Division number, and in most cases were absolutely ignorant as to who their officers were.

If further proof was needed to what extent the Germans were short of men, here it was, and when the 113th and 142nd Infantry Regiments (remnant of the 29th Division) finally was thrown in on the second day to fill the gap (3rd Naval Division nearly wiped out), the confusion was complete.

October 17th at 5:20 A. M., the attack was finally launched, the delay made necessary to improve the communications. It covered a 10-mile front from le Cateau south, our line consisting of

46th, 1st, 6th, 50th and 66th English, 27th and 30th American Divisions.

During the first two days the resistance was obstinate. The German artillery seemed more powerful than in the Hindenburg affair. They stayed longer, too, what our P. of W. records can prove, as the 27th Division alone took 16 artillery officers those days.

The 19th the resistance was broken. Although raining, muddy and foggy, the 27th had crossed the river, despite an intense bombardment, constructed bridges, and carried the Jonc de Mer heights, but nearing the St. Maurice River, a small stream in front of Catillon, and about three and one-half miles northeast of St. Souplet, the resistance again stiffened, until the 3rd British Army on the night of October 20th opened a new drive north of le Cateau, which threatened the German flank, and forced them to fall back. October 21st saw us in possession of St. Martin, Bazuel, Molain, Wassigny, Arbre Guernon, Ribeaupville, Mazinghien, St. Souplet, and la Valle Mulatre, our Division had made a gain of almost 5 miles, and 42 officers and about 1,600 men had been taken prisoners in 4 days.

As to our small share in the big outcome, the 102nd M. P. on October 16th withdrew the details from Becquigny and Bohain, and the patrols on the Vaux-Audigny road, the 30th American Division moving in south of us, taking over Becquigny and Bohain being British domain.

Same evening at 18th hour (battle time) a detail reported at 107th Infantry Headquarters, advancing to St. Souplet next morning with the regiment. On the 17th about 5 A. M. another left for Menneresse, and a third for Escaufort, at that time also used as base for our mounted men. The Busigny posts 1-5 remained as before, reinforcement being sent to post 5, where the Division P. of W. cage was located. And as developments the following days necessitated additional posts, especially at St. Souplet and the Advanced Dressing Stations, every available man, including wagoners, horseshoers, clerks and cooks, were soon forced into the break to satisfy the requirements.

The morning of the 17th proved to be rather costly. Moving into position, just when our barrage opened, our details and mounted men were caught in the German counter barrage. Before noon we had not less than 6 men wounded, and, shells and gas being plentiful, it seemed certain that it wouldn't be the last.

Our details at St. Souplet, without any doubt, got the worst of it. For two whole days they were in the midst of his frantic bombardment put down on the town to prevent us from using the bridge they had blown up but which we had repaired, or the construction of additional bridges for the Artillery and Supply. Unceasingly the shells crashed into the town, and when the men sought cover in



German Aeroplane-picture taken over our line north of Bohain

the ruins, the poisonous gas would stretch out its cruel hand to finish what the shrapnels had left undone.

The gas didn't succeed, but it came close enough. Luck, and nothing else, saved our men, who sometimes had to work hours at a time in the gas masks. And when they finally came out on the 21st, they were all hoarse, red-eyed and coughing, but fortunately the cases were all slight.

The mounted men and the other details in that sector had equally dangerous experiences, even if the shelling behind Souplet was less intense, when the first assault was over. While our right flank, cut by the Premont-Vaux-Audigny road—the main vein for supply—all the time was in for heavy fire, lasting up to the very last day. The P. of W. cage, situated in the southeast corner of the crossroad at post 5, was thus the constant victim for "stray shells," naturally intended for the road but landing all over the field. October 21st the entire outfit reported at Brancourt, stayed there over night, and next day "a la Australian," which means "by hopping lorries," returned to the P. of W. cage at Roisel—for a real rest, at last!

It is doubtful if anybody can give much of an account of our two days' stay there. We just turned in and fell to sleep—slept as only a man taxed to the utmost of his endurance can sleep—and, what's more, we deserved it!

For four weeks we hadn't been out of our clothes. For four whole weeks every man had been under a continuous, sapping strain—mentally and physically. We had gone in with our Division on the 25th. Withdrew with it on October 2nd, but were already sent up again the next day to remain in the line until October 21st. During these four weeks we had followed the crest of our advance yard by yard. Our men were often worn out to the verge of an utter collapse, but they gamely stuck it out, refused to be relieved, even if any number of them were fit for a hospital bed, and when we finally withdrew they were still all "in it"—even if dead tired and only a hair's-breadth from breaking down under the tremendous effort. A 41-kilometer advance was our reward; 6,000 prisoners had gone through our hands, our traffic, patrol, straggler and battlepost records were beyond reproach; if an indication of the M. P.'s energy and anxiousness still needs any comment, such is easily illustrated by citing an Australian officer's words, when some of our eager men came up and asked for the direction to a certain town, where they were going to establish a post: "Now, wait a minute, boys; you can't enter a town before it is taken." That was exactly the spirit of the men of the 102nd M. P., the spirit which caused one of the German officers to say about our infantry: "We can kill them, but we can't stop them." That was exactly the spirit which kept our men going—and made them fall down in a heap, when the work was done and the strain off.

German prisoners carrying back American Wounded.



October 24th, late in the afternoon, we marched to the railroad station to entrain for Corbie. Just swinging out of camp, the railroad tracks blew up, destroyed by the explosion of a "time-fuse" left behind by Jerry as a fitting souvenir. It meant a momentary paralysis of the traffic, and made us march to Tincourt for our train. Further delay there caused us to spend an ice cold night in the open. About 5 A. M. we were finally notified that traffic had been re-established, and at dinnertime we pulled into Corbie.

Corbie, as Villers-Bretonneux further south, had seen the climax of the German drive. It was here they were definitely stopped, and it was these towns which had been used as the jumping-off points when our counter drive started. They were therefore naturally badly battered, and the houses far from waterproof, but they provided fair quarters, and, what was far more important, rest and quiet.

In this area the Division rested and reorganized for about 3 weeks. Both being equally essential, as our losses had been terrible. The villages all being small, the Division was scattered around in a string of towns centering on Corbie, and a few days after we were therefore again called out, to garrison Amiens, Villers-Bretonneux, Bussy, Vecquemont, Bonnav, Daours, and Vaux-sur-Somme.

October 31st Major Shanton was relieved of the command, and Captain Ceballos made A. P. M. The reorganization thus at last being a fact. Captain Dieges was transferred. Two N. C. O.'s went to the Military Police O. T. S. November 4 and 5th we participated in the 2nd American Corps' big Division Athletic Meet near la Neuville. November 10th our Division held a Memorial Parade for our killed on a field southwest of Corbie. At the same time the proudest and saddest ceremony in the Division's history. But why deny that all this came only second compared with the all-important question: Peace! Yes or no?

The possibility for this seemed very bright.

Turkey and Bulgaria had capitulated, Austria collapsed. The new attacks directed against Valenciennes, the Tournay salient, the Meuse line, in the Argonne, north and south of Bois de Mormal toward Mauberge, and against Ghent, had forced the enemy into a disorderly retreat, beyond recovery. Thursday, November 7th, the German negotiation delegates left Berlin, and at 11 A. M., November 11th, 1918, the church chimes acknowledged that hostilities had been suspended, at a time when we were ready and capable of starting a new and decisive drive which would have meant absolute disaster to the German armies, whose defensive powers had already been definitely destroyed.

November 18th our detail from the 2nd American Corps, who joined us while we resided at Corbie, was recalled.

November 23rd the Division started its southward move to the le Mans area, our men detailed with the different trains, and the entire outfit therefore first assembled in Montfort by December 8th. And, as we now leave the English sector, let us frankly admit that nothing better could have happened to the Division than being sent up to toil with the "Tommies."

What the exact reasons were for our engagement and appearance on that front we still don't know. Maybe necessity, or because we were meant to play the part of a sacrifice animal, or it was one of the many military experiments. But be this as it may, it turned out to be extraordinarily fortunate, when we had first recovered from the immediate shock and surprise and got used to the unexpected surroundings and their way of doing things.

We worked to start with under the trying handicap of fighting, and having to make good, with veterans of four years of war, war fought against odds as we never will be able to realize, but as our grit, courage and fighting qualities had overcome this barrier, the handicap soon proved to be of extreme advantage, as our comrades in arms provided us with a perfect supply system, an artillery which had been brought down to the very limits of science and accuracy, at the same time giving us the privilege of benefiting from their wonderful organization and inexhaustible experience. If we made our "entrée" burdened with certain settled ideas, even prejudice, against the English, their characteristics, system or methods, we most certainly left them filled with admiration, their ability to adapt themselves to almost German foresight, thoroughness and "system" was a revelation.

The towns in our new community were smaller than ever, so that not less than 32 villages were required this time to house the entire division, namely: Montfort, Pont de Gennes, le Breil, Bouloire, Surfonds, Ardenay, Soultre, Thorigne, Nuille, Dollon, St. Michel, St. Corneille, Connerre, Duneau, Tuffe, St. Hilaire, St. Celerin, la Chapelle, Yvre l'Eveque, Savigny, Champagne, Fatines, Lombron, Condrecieux, Gaslande, Volney, Parence, Courseboeuf, Chanteloup, Sille le Philip, Sarge, le Luart. Four more—Laval, Montsurs, Louverne and Argentre—were added to the long list a few days later, when our Artillery, the 52nd F. A. Brigade (who had been attached to the 33rd Division in the American sector) arrived.

January 2nd, 1919, the 4th Company of the newly formed Area Military Police made their appearance and relieved us, from then on taking over, and acting as permanent corps police for the sector. About a week later we turned in horses and transports. We were ready to go!

But—and this is the reason why we hate the very name of the le Mans area—we didn't!

We stayed, and stayed, and stayed. One day, two days and

more—many more—days. We were poisoned with rumors, red tape and disappointments. It was, without comparison, the crucial test of the entire war. Only men of the 27th Division will know what amount of disappointment, despair and rage is connected with dates as December 15th, January 1st, January 10th, January 21st, February 11th and February 16th. Only men of the 27th Division understand what the news meant: We have drawn 10 more days' rations!

The rumors flourished, appeared and disappeared in such quality and quantity that we silently promised never—never—again to smile or criticize female gossip-collecting. That we lived through it is more than a miracle, we hardly slept, barely ate—and the wine wasn't worth drinking.

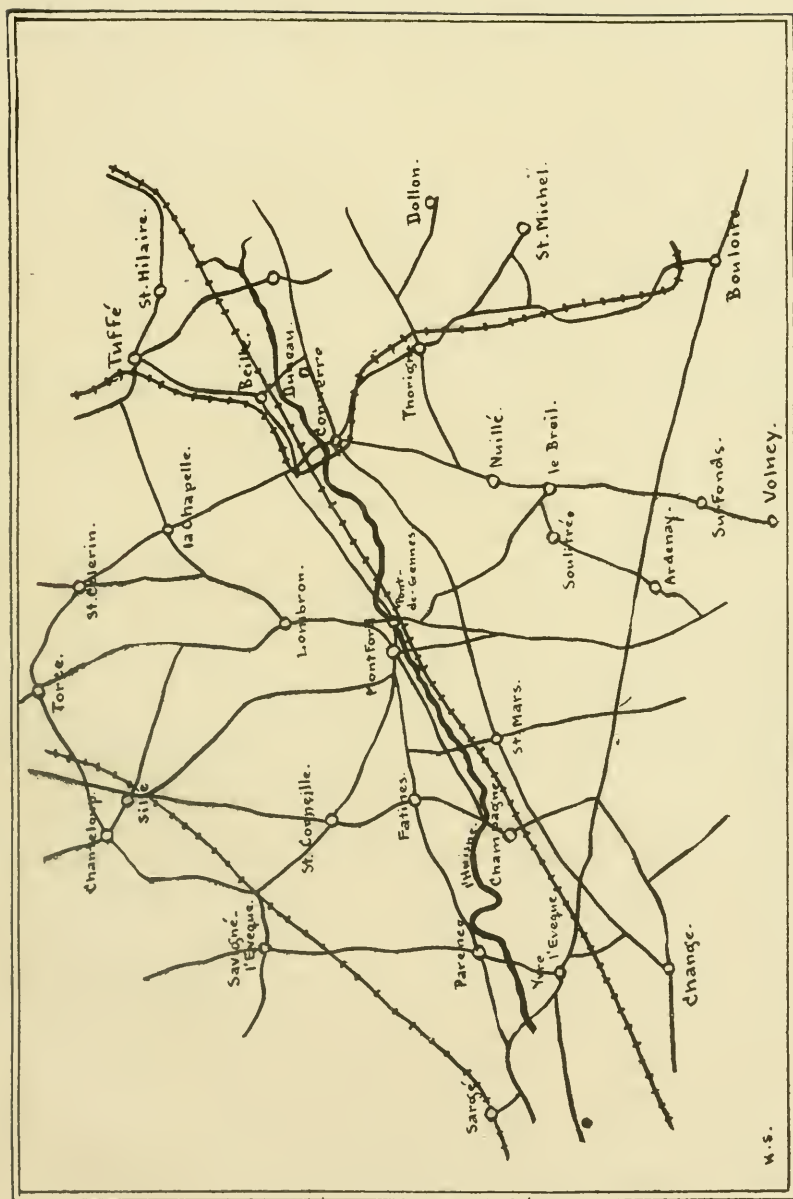
"Flu" had already for some time harassed our camp. Regan, Burns and Keith left for the hospitals, and finally had to bow to the same grim death they so gallantly and fearlessly faced and fought on the battlefields. Spang and Davidson, two of our old comrades in arms, had already previously paid the same sacrifice. But— isn't death worth while, when you die as a man, fighting for right and ideals?

January 22nd, General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the A. E. F., arrived, his private train staying over at Connerre, such necessitating a detail there as Guard of Honor. About 50 men left for the "Belgian Camp," where the Division review was held the next day, the various decorations at the same time being officially awarded to the distinguished heroes.

January 29th our Company records were inspected by the Embarkation Officers, nourishing new hopes as to an early return. When moving orders really did arrive, February 4th, to leave February 11th, the Division became delirious—to be on the verge of a wholesale suicide craze before night, as the Message Center, at 4 P. M., sent out a new bulletin cancelling the morning order.

February 7th a cold spell breezed in, resulting in nights spent under cover of every available bit of clothing, including shoes, gloves, overcoat and hat. Not only, however, because it was cold, but because the "getting home" fever was so predominating that nobody dared take the slightest chance of being left behind when the order came. It was the most illustrating example we ever saw, or expect to see, of "watchful waiting" and "preparedness."

Our physical and property inspections progressed favorably. The last cootie had been caught, skinned and stuffed for the Division Museum. Our equipment and property brought up—or down—to the required proportions. Our final ordnance inspection, unexpectedly, throwing new light on the reasons for the speedy conclusion of the world's war, and our acceptance of the armistice—the United States was short of shoe laces! Each O. D. soldier, accordingly, had to bring back to the only country two pairs of these



M. S.

valuable life necessities, to relieve the suffering and shortcoming back home. We are happy to say that we, on our subway and car rides, already have seen that this serious economic shortage has been remedied, even if we think that some girls wear shorter dresses than absolutely necessary, for the purpose of convincing the homecoming boys of their appreciation, and prove the presence of the coveted laces.

February 20th—at last—our patient souls got their deserved reward—the moving order arrived! February 24th we left over Connerre for Brest. It was a wonderful day, which, despite occasional showers, forever will stand out in our recollection as a vision of sunshine and smiles. First, because we were finally on our way home; secondly, by the alluring prospect of one and one-half pound beefsteaks on the train. But for once—or rather, as usual—the “Stars and Stripes” had made a mistake, the journalist, by some odd accident and carelessness, getting a line about the Paris-Bagdad sleeper into our modest and democratic news column. However, we had gone without food so often before, we were on our way home, and as we still had to go through Brest—a camp of exceptional reputation—we didn’t talk much about it, even if—this was confirmed by some of our men who talked in their sleep—it made a certain impression.

February 25th, about 3:30, the harbor of Brest displayed its cradle of dreams for our wondering eyes. We detrained, had supper in an American “quick lunch” mess, and marched out to camp—the camp with the exceptional reputation. That we arrived in a drizzling rain is hardly worth commenting on, as a day without rain at Brest is a distinct failure. That camp and roads—at least what we saw of it—was a mire of mud, with duckboards to prevent casualties, and tents far below the required sanitary standard, is likewise non-essential, as rumors to that effect had reached us while we were still fighting in Flanders. But it did look like a rather unhealthy joke to advertise the Brest camp as a “cleaning-up resort,” we most certainly didn’t improve our hygienic or health standard while there. Five days we spent in this place, usually busily engaged at some important and necessary fatigue detail or other. In the morning f. i. we would bring 200 boards from point A to point B, and in the afternoon from point B back to point A. It speaks loud about the morale and high quality of our men, when we survived it without a “breakdown,” and even had “excellent” on our working papers.

March 3rd we moved over to barracks—a change which didn’t look promising to us right then. Two hours after, while at mess (burned “goldfish”), a new message almost stunned us: the Company had to be at the pier in about an hour!

It was the best and speediest move we ever executed. Happy, and silent as ghosts, we jumped into the lorries, and left for the

harbor, where we were met by the officers. Roll call! Another silent procession to the lighter, and we were off—on our way back home! C. 8:30 P. M., we boarded the liner, SS. *Mt. Vernon*. Less than half an hour after the big ship hoisted anchor and set out for home. It was all so sudden, so wonderful, it didn't seem real at all.

Crowded on the decks we motionless watched the lights and the dark silhouette of shore disappearing in the night. Listened to the propellers, each swift turn bringing us another yard or two nearer "there." One hat after another was removed, to give the salt breeze free play around feverishly hot foreheads. Hardly a word was said, as if afraid it should awaken us from a dream—a dream we loved to dream. It was the night of nights, the night where tears could be detected in eyes who had faced death and destruction without the slightest fear, it was *the* night, worth every bit

IN MEMORIAL

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of suffering, hardship and danger, only—it didn't seem real, it was almost too wonderful to be true.

March 11th we again set foot on American soil, and after a good long look at "the old girl" and the treasure she is guarding so carefully—New York City—left for Camp Mills, where we remained until Parade Day, March 25th, where the town and nation gave us a welcome which, as a sergeant of the 108th Infantry and a Major who once gave us a hand-to-hand talk in France both said—almost (!)—repaid us for whatever we might have gone through, and March 26th we were sent to Camp Upton, to await our "execution."

April 1st, after being fooled and delayed several times on account of trivial red-tape mistakes, we—at last—acquired the most sacred and treasured paper in a soldier's life, hopes and dreams—our discharge! We were, once more, free men, peaceful citizens, ready to enter a new strenuous—if less bloody—engagement: the battle for an existence.

FINIS

Do you remember when we talked together—you and I—after the war? While in some French, little town, counting seconds, minutes and hours, until the boat finally came and brought us back home. Do you remember how we talked and talked—you and I—and almost considered a year lost?

But—do you remember something else?

Do you remember how we felt—you and I—when we came back, and stepped off that same boat?

We felt good that day, happy, proud and at ease, didn't we? We had a good conscience!

Happiness in this life does not come from wealth, material success or position. Not the real happiness, at least.

Only a clear conscience makes a man feel at ease. Only a clear conscience makes life worth while. And—would we have felt that way if we hadn't—wasted—that year?

Most certainly no!

Now we felt happy, proud and at ease. Felt that we had done our duty, responded willingly, without hesitation, when the call came, proved that we were men, true sons of a great nation. No, we did not waste that year, you and I!



HEADQUARTERS 27TH DIVISION, U. S. A.

American E. F., France.

FROM: Commanding General,
To: Commanding Officer, 102nd Military Police.
SUBJECT: Commendation.

October 22, 1918.

1. Since the great battle for the breaking of the Hindenburg Line, September 25th-30th, the division after a few days of rest has been engaged in almost continuous marching and fighting. The rapidity with which operations have succeeded each other and the many new features and problems presented with each successive Police. Their work has been ceaseless and their efficiency marked. Everywhere advance have furnished many difficulties to be met and overcome by the Military they have shown resourcefulness and their handling of the many prisoners taken has been most satisfactory.

2. It is a pleasure to make record of this efficient accomplishment and to commend the officers and men of the 102nd Military Police.

JOHN F. O'RYAN,
Major General.

HEADQUARTERS 2ND CORPS, A. E. F.

Office of the Provost Marshal.

CAPT. J. W. CEBALLOS,
Provost Marshal, 27th Div.,

January 5, 1919.

MY DEAR CAPT. CEBALLOS:

As the time is rapidly approaching when the Military Police of the 27th Division are about to sail for home, I would like to add a word to the many commendations you have received for your work in France.

In all the recent operations on the British Front in which we have been together, your men have been under my close personal observation and many of them have been detailed to work with these Headquarters.

They have been brave, efficient and trustworthy throughout, extremely soldierly in bearing, good horsemen and thoroughly reliable. From my observation of some eleven divisions I can truthfully say that none have excelled them.

I wish you all a safe return and all kinds of good luck and prosperity in the future.

Sincerely yours,

H. A. C. DE RUBIO,
Major, P. M. II Corps.

HEADQUARTERS 27TH DIVISION, U. S. A.,

American E. F., France.

January 25, 1919.

CAPT. JUAN W. CEBALLOS,
Commanding 102nd Military Police,
27th Division, U. S. A.,
American E. F., France.

MY DEAR CAPTAIN CEBALLOS:

Now that the Division is about to leave France for the United States, I take this opportunity of expressing to you my appreciation of the excellence of the Military Police work of your command throughout the entire period of the service of the Division both in the United States and in France. At all times your command has constituted a model of military precision and courtesy. Its standards in relation to these qualities have been met in other respects, for in battle you and your officers and men aggressively and intelligently, and with the greatest courage, performed your battle functions. You have had a personnel of the very highest class with which to work, but even such a personnel, to be effective under the trying conditions of war, must possess disciplined and skilled leadership, and these were not lacking.

Commendation of the Military Police of this Division would not be complete without some reference to the integrity of its personnel. Never has this been impeached. The Divisional Military Police by their standards of honor, impartial and courageous enforcement of battle orders and routine regulations, have won the respect and admiration of the entire Division.

Very respectfully,

(Signed)

JOHN F. O'RYAN,
Major General.

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